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VERNON YOUNG

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Rhetoric and Technique in J. S. Bach
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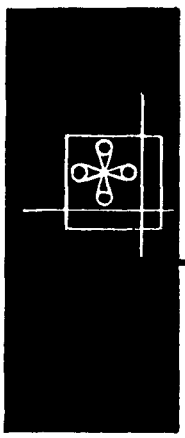

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Joseph Conrad: Outline for a Reconsideration

VERNON YOUNG

As the literature of the immediate past appears to assume a definable shape in harmony with what is considered, in the present, to be central for emphasis, neglected reputations are suddenly importuned for evidence of anticipation or continuity. The contemporary interest in symbolism and in the subject of moral ambiguity, the preoccupation with the problems of guilt and anxiety, the concern for defining the status of the refugee, the alien, the artist, the intellectual: these emphases have been responsible for extensive revaluations of Dostoevsky, Melville and Kafka as well as of Henry James and Forster.

Somehow, in this revival of intentions and achievements, the literature of Joseph Conrad has, until very recently, been neglected. Critically, it has been left, since Conrad's death, largely to the chivalrous but less than canny services of such eulogists as R. B. Cunningham Grahame, Ford Madox Ford, William McFee and J. Donald Adams. This gentry has over-promoted the positive Elizabethan gentleman-adventurer qualities of Conrad's life and art, qualities which actually never existed, and the serious contemporary reader has accepted the view and been repelled additionally, it would seem, by the external melodrama of many Conrad narratives, by the didactic layer of heroic idealism in them—which, upon examination, proves to be barely skin deep —and possibly, despite the praise accorded the "final" Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, William Faulkner, even Thomas Wolfe, all of whom are on occasion no less euphuistic, by the frequently baroque manner of Conrad's prose.

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A discerning re-visit to Conrad's novels should be visible reminder of contributions surprisingly forgotten or ignored. Conrad, when his powers were most confidently directed, was a master of what has come to be known as the Symbolist novel. After Dostoevsky, he was the first considerable writer to handle the psycho-political genre, anticipating in *Nostromo, The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes,* much of the substance and thematic material of Malraux, Silone, Koestler and Neumann. In *The Secret Sharer* he made unique artistic use of the divided man, that modern fission of personality inexorably foreshadowed during the last century by Hoffman, Poe, Stevenson and Dostoevsky. He appropriated, in more tragic degree than James and long before E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence, the pathos of the incompatible "foreigner," expanded the predicament of the alien into the universal experience of spiritual isolation that has become the common property of almost all our major novelists. Without specifying direct influence, one may recognize the climate of his milieu of estrangement in the world of Kafka, its tone in certain works of Thomas Mann and Robert Neumann (compare *The Secret Sharer* with *Mario and the Magician,* and *Chance* with *The Inquest*), its geography—the combination of dramatic action, rendered scene and psychological complexity—on a more popular plane, in the novels of Graham Greene and its mere motions, unfortunately, in the involvement of wide-eyed rhetoric which H. M. Tomlinson elaborated after *The Sea and the Jungle* and in the clichés of disenchanted character perpetrated by Somerset Maugham. Most importantly, his conception of personality, as it received subtlest application, was a progenitor of Proust's "transparent envelope" and Virginia Woolf's "luminous halo." He is united, in short, not simply by virtue of his intricate method but by the focus of his psychic interest and by his personal agony which he continuously and ambiguously dramatized, with all the literary artists of our time who have shaped the outlines of what may be considered, whatever other interests it espouses, the confessional novel.

The double question that arises in respect to Conrad is to what

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extent he succeeded in resolving artistically the moral problems he enunciated and how his achievement then compares with those of others who have borne stresses similar to his. A fresh estimate of Conrad attempted within the exacting and varied standards of contemporary criticism is a creative task that may well augment our enjoyment in re-reading him and provoke new considerations of the flux of modern fiction. Conrad has been widely admired, at intervals, by a curious variety of temperaments for an equally curious variety of reasons. As in the case of Kafka, particularly, his totality has evaded his interpreters, and in desperation many have finally arisen to declare that his totality was not worth interpreting. But the feeling persists, in more patient quarters, that his novels are profound parables of moral struggle containing recurrent patterns of symbolism and reference. It is the opinion of this writer that the more closely Conrad is read, the less easily he submits to any of the schemata that have been written down for him.

The most perceptive and earnest tributes to his art and casuistry have recently been paid in Albert Guerard, Jr.'s brief but highly charged study* and in Morton Dauwen Zabel's analyses which, published separately during the last seven years, reach their condensed climax in his eloquently introduced and carefully edited Portable.† For Zabel, Conrad was a dedicated figure, pledged in his novels to "the salvation of personality by the tests of experience and by the recognition of selfhood. . . . He now appears an English writer of European and world stature" and "a distinction belongs to him which confines him to no given period but demands a larger reference, bringing him into the highest company the English and the European novel provides." Guerard's approval lies further this side hagiolatry; his respect for Conrad is qualified by doubt as to his ultimate security of spiritual affirmation and by documented contentions that he suffered a serious loss in imagination and therefore in style after

* *Joseph Conrad*, by Albert Guerard, Jr. *Direction, I.* New Directions, 1947.

† *The Portable Conrad*, edited with introduction and notes, by Morton Dauwen Zabel. The Viking Press, 1947.

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1915. Both Zabel and Guerard point out the evasions, the concealments and the contradictions that appear in Conrad's critical statements, letters and in the novels themselves; neither presses the significance of these uncertainties to where they might be construed as representing an improperly ordered duality of purpose. To Zabel, they are clearly subsumed by the larger context of spiritual recognition and control. To Guerard, they are evidence of inequality between Conrad's critical intelligence and his imaginative solutions. In any case, they constitute the armor which must be penetrated before the nature of Conrad's artistic personality can be revealed.

In the characteristic Conradian action, the protagonist is submitted to an ordeal that challenges the illusion by which he has lived or to a fear that threatens his capacity to live with honor and peace; he either faces or fails to face the ordeal (and whether he does so or not, he is usually destroyed). When he faces it, Zabel believes, he earns, through self-knowledge and consequent resumption of the social instinct, redemption and release from moral isolation. This attainment of victory is most obviously illustrated by the crew in *The Nigger of the Narcissus,* by Kurtz and Decoud (both, too late) in *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo,* and by the narrator-captain of *The Shadow Line.* The failure so to confront the consequences of illusion are conspicuously dramatized in the miserable defeats of Almayer and Willems, Kayerts and Carlier, in the stricken figure of Il Conde and in the subtle corruption of Charles Gould; these are some of the negative demonstrations of the moral battle. Yet there are, it seems to me, other alternatives of subsequence that complicate the simplicity of reading Conrad's novels as chapters in a pilgrim's progress. It is justifiable to maintain that he wrote neither a consistently ironic nor a consistently affirmative vision, that his was an art of contraries in which the features of bleak pessimism were barely controlled by the ill-worn masks of irony or affirmation. This conclusion can be inferred from the peculiar shuttling movement of his development (as against the sure, dilating growth, form-and-content, of a James or a Mann), by the habit

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of concealment which split his performances from his contentions, finally stagnating his inventive resources, and by his inability to enter certain areas, hereinafter designated, because they lay not so much outside his sympathy as beyond his scope. If, in expatiation of this outline, I commit the presumption of allying Conrad's personal dilemma with those of his characters, I plead the respectable precedent of much contemporary criticism and urge the reader to avail himself of Conrad's letters and biographies.

II

If, in *Heart of Darkness,* the crisis is Kurtz's recognition before death of the moral corruption of his life, what bearing has Marlow's refusal to disclose this truth to Kurtz's sweetheart? By the lie Marlow tells her, she is exalted and presumably sustained; Marlow's knowledge of the heart of darkness which he spares her puts the signature of devastating irony on this story. Recognition is its climax, but irony its total and painful medium. In *Typhoon,* Captain MacWhirr wins through adversity without any self-knowledge whatever and if we are to suppose, as Conrad suggests, that the captain is spiritually damned (or voided) we are allowed no deeper sympathy with the disintegrated second mate or the susceptible Jukes, whose final opinion of MacWhirr ("I think that he got out of it very well for such a stupid man") plainly falls short of the truth in the matter. The crew of the *Nan-Shan,* of course (like that of the *Narcissus*), figure as polar examples of reaction to crucial trial. Enough of Conrad's affection went into the portrait of MacWhirr to suggest that he sometimes considered imagination and uncompromising recognition expensive luxuries. That illusion can save as well as kill is evident in these two stories, since Marlow's lie and MacWhirr's obtuseness do not lack Conrad's approval.

Lord Jim, where moral ambiguity looms largely indeed, is perhaps the *Hamlet* of Joseph Conrad. William Wallace Bancroft,*

* *Joseph Conrad, His Philosophy of Life,* by W. W. Bancroft. The Stratford Co., 1933.

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one of the first solemn investigators of the moral principles in Conrad's novels, asserted the existence therein of a Moral Law to which the Conrad hero, in his positive aspect, accedes by a transmutation of experience. By this reading, similar to Zabel's, Lord Jim's final surrender to the natives whom he has betrayed by default is his recognition of the operation of this Moral Law, through which he re-establishes his connection with Human Solidarity. (The capitals are Bancroft's.) But there is at least one other sentiment possible to entertain. Unless we are indeed to suppose that Conrad believed Jim's isolation to be a predicament resolved under the shadow of eternity rather than the struggle of a conscience to meet the demands of a particular culture's imperative, the exoneration is surely ironic, since Jim makes his belated sacrifice far from the audience to whom it would have had most ethical significance. Marlow, by a serpentine contrivance of narrative, learns of Jim's gesture, and his "he was one of us," quoted with such persistently elastic reference by critics that it begins to take on the featurelessness of a cliché, has, in its original context, a very "pukka sahib" ring to it. There is no doubt that Marlow's verdict on Jim applauds his faltering progress toward the substantiation of a romantic ideal; that ideal is far more consonant, in Jim's case, with self-justification than with Human Solidarity. Another view of the case might hold that after Jim has failed three times to act in accordance with his notion of enterprise and honor—the first failure setting up the pattern of defeat for the others—it is simply easier for him to die than live at Patusan; in terms of the physical situation, Conrad really provided him with no alternative. And if by his renunciation Jim rejoins the circle of human sympathies in the abstract, he has, in the particular, rejected the tangible devotion of the native girl, Jewel. There is an altogether serious disparity in this novel, it seems to me, between the symbolic and far-hinting theme announced by Stein, "In the destructive element immerse," and the priggish attempts of Lord Jim to keep his head above water by the vain consolations of gentlemanly action.

Under Western Eyes involves another serious difficulty in in-

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terpretation of the point of view. Razumov, the student dedicated to the conservation of culture, betrays a revolutionary, Haldin, whose friends are plotting against the institutions of the culture. Employed by the official guardians of the institutions, against his desire, further to investigate its enemies, Razumov is finally overcome by remorse and confesses his deed to Haldin's friends. At this moment of moral liberation, he is maimed for life by an anarchist fellow-traveller of the Haldin circle. In the face of this stupefying and almost gratuitous form of cruelty, the reader is justified in demanding the ethical and dramatic necessity for Razumov's extreme punishment. He had, it is true, betrayed his fellow-man as seriously as Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov had done; but, unlike Raskolnikov, he had been condoned by society for his betrayal. Here, Bancroft's Moral Law is in opposition to social law (or to False Institutions, as Bancroft puts it); atonement must still be exacted. However, the sardonic narrator of *Under Western Eyes* makes unmistakably clear that Haldin's circle is arrogant, fanatic and preposterous, so that it would seem as if Razumov's confession reunites him, through the process of guilt, not with human solidarity but with the foes of it. The ambiguity is a subtle one. As in *Lord Jim*, one hesitates how far to identify Conrad with the narrator he has interposed. Our strongest encouragement for uniting Conrad's sympathies with those of the professor in this novel is Conrad's well-known aversion to things Russian (under Eastern eyes) and his horror of the political revolutionary extremist, a type he treated with brilliant and savage irony in *The Secret Agent*.

It may have been such interesting manipulations as these which prompted Guerard's assertion that Conrad was probably more skeptical than Zabel (and others) think him. Skepticism implies a shrewdly intellectual balancing of a variety of possibilities. Conrad frequently strove to give the impression of such detachment and within particular works he handled the appearance skillfully. None the less, it is as likely from the evidence of his contradictions that he was congenitally incapable of real skepticism, as he was of real commitment. He proclaimed, with equal

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zeal, the invincibility of human fellowship and the sanctified but terrible loneliness of the individual mind. ". . . Solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow," in so forth, "binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn." But identity exists only in proximity, for: ". . . to us the limits of the universe are strictly defined by those we know. There is nothing for us outside the babble of praise and blame on familiar lips, and beyond our last acquaintance lies only a vast chaos." . . . "A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love." But: "All a man can betray is his own conscience." ". . . The world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, amongst others, on the idea of Fidelity." However: "Faith is a myth and beliefs shift like mists on the shore. . . ."

These are not inconsistencies so much as insecurities of orientation, possibly inspired by the modulations of Conrad's health. Few writers would emerge logically consistent from a display of all their published thoughts, unofficial as well as fictional. But these are sufficient to indicate that Conrad maintained neither a fearless skepticism nor an undaunted certitude. The more suspicious contradictions arise in his famous ambivalence toward Dostoevsky—his condescending criticism, on the one hand, that the Russian lacked detachment, and on the other, his admission to J. H. Retinger* that "he thought Dostoevsky the greatest psychologist among novelists"—and in his definitive description of the artist who "descends within himself and in that lonely region of stress and strife . . . finds the terms of his appeal," followed by a refusal to read Freud.† The reader of Conrad will find many irreconcilables for himself; those signify which are important to an understanding of the peculiar tensions that underlay Conrad's art. Both the source and the issue of these tensions are illustrated in his prevalent theme of fear.

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* J. H. Retinger, *Conrad and his Contemporaries*, Roy Publishers. 1943.

† If Conrad was afraid of mechanizing his intuitions, as his defenders claim, he must have held them precariously indeed. Lawrence also rejected Freud, but *after* reading him and finding him supererogatory.

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Fear is the *memento mori* at the Conrad feast; it is omnipresent. The demons of anxiety at the threshold, sometimes at the climax, of duty or maturity, fears nameless or specified, imperil all of Conrad's key characters, even when not the ostensible subject of a particular novel. Their singularity lies in this: that they are never really overcome—obsession overtakes dramatic necessity. The first full symbolic furnishing of this theme was *The Nigger of the Narcissus;* the exotic, sinister, indolently corrupting person of James Wait stands as black symbol of the will-to-panic in the forecastle of the ego. The perilous voyage of the *Narcissus* is completed, but not before the crew has mastered its threatened loss of morale and the dark burden of James Wait is consigned to the depths. A major re-ordering of these forces received consummate expression twelve years and some ten books later in *The Secret Sharer,* but the elements were never absent; their salient presences inhabited *Heart of Darkness* and *Typhoon.* If *The Secret Sharer* is the purest distillation and confronting of this obsession* (and there is much to be said for this preference) one might expect it to be the climax of the problem and that, thereafter, the secret sharer (the Nigger, "the horror," the typhoon's heart) having been faced and exorcized, a new resolution would ensue, subtly changing the forms and conceptions of the later novels. Instead, we find that *Under Western Eyes,* in which anxiety and pessimism are more terribly wrestled with than ever, was written after, though published before, *The Secret Sharer. Chance* (1913), and *Victory* (1915), whatever command they entailed of Conrad's hard-won narrative method and clarity of drawing, cannot be said to justify the hinted transformation and development from the novels written between 1904 and 1911. The miraculous labyrinths of *Chance* lead to an extraordinarily meager dénouement and the tentative Heyst in *Victory,* in his context as plausible as Conrad's art could make him, is an almost tiresome simulacrum of Lord Jim, still hesi-

* M. C. Bradbrook first observed that Leggatt, the other self, wears a sleeping-suit, "the garb of the unconscious." It is equally important to notice, as Guerard does, that Leggatt *arrives naked,* and the captain puts *his own* sleeping-suit on the visitor, a distinction that emphasizes the compulsive nature of the evocation.

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tating (from different motives, of course) before the jump. *The Shadow Line* (1917) is distinctly a return to the obsessive subject of *The Secret Sharer* and as perfect in execution of phenomenal detail and luminosity of prose style. And again, the dead captain of the narrator's first command, in this novelette, plays a similar role to that of James Wait in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*: his demoralizing influence must be overcome by resolute navigation and the suppression of doubt.

And it is by this time inescapable that an endogenous fear possessed Conrad to the end of his days; the spectre was never laid. Anticlimax haunts his final versions of fear and recognition. The production of his latest years does not modify the besetting themes of his middle period and is otherwise inferior. The serenity of *The Rover*, for example, is senescent rather than philosophic. To dwell on the artistic demerits of these "Recollections in Tranquillity," as M. C. Bradbrook labelled them, is no part of this essay: sufficient to observe that there is not the descent into the depths and the mighty resignation of Melville and Dostoevsky, not the controlled and finely textured amplitude of James, Proust or Mann—rather, a Kafka-like burrowing and a hopeless surrender to the facts of incompatibility, like E. M. Forster's, except that it is unredeemed by the "relaxed will" or the play of wit.

A clue to this permanent, compulsive hesitation is provided by the aims with which Conrad's leading characters are infused. They are all in quest of moral identity alone; they do not seek being, total function. They seek final gratification through *notions* of self, never through *expression* of self. The notions may be depicted as legitimate or false; they are always notions: of independence, of honor, of self-esteem, of ability, of social respect, of benevolent motives. His people, down to the lowliest, are in the abstract sense, self-conscious. Encumbered by their creator with the burden of consciousness without roots, they can only react to and under the compulsion of concepts. Moving as they do against the background of a magnificently visualized world of objects they nevertheless have no satisfying correlation with it, no animal resources for life, no really sentient experi-

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ence of existence. Necessarily, when events in the nominal world operate against them, they confuse events with things and the universe turns unutterably alien—and most poignantly when, through the exclusiveness of solitude, events appear not to exist.

I think that this was Conrad's experience and that when Gustav Morf offered to explain this alienation—which he saw chiefly in the divided heroes like Jim and Decoud—by recourse to Conrad's flight from Poland, he found only another corollary, not the cause. He made very convincing cross-references for his partial theory, but I believe it is a deeper-going condition that he found, that Conrad was not simply a stranger away from Poland —he was a stranger on the earth. Morf tried further to elucidate Conrad's circling motions around the factor of isolation by support of Jung's description of the intuitive type which apprehends reality by means of identification and, where identification is impossible, substitutes verbiage. This is again a location of symptom merely. The anxious persistence of identification can be more clearly accounted for by Freud's clinical axiom, "Conscience follows suppression." As to the nuclear complex which surrounded the suppression, it is not my desire to speculate here. Without doubt, it was more extensive and earlier acquired than Conrad's guilt-feeling vis-à-vis Poland. In Heyst's remorseful admission to Davidson, in *Victory*, few serious critics have failed to set the provenance of Conrad's ill-concealed despair: "Ah, Davidson, woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life!" The cry from his soul that Conrad uttered in a letter to R. B. Cunninghame Grahame testifies to this ineluctable sense of being ontologically adrift: "The attitude of cold unconcern is the only reasonable one. Of course reason is hateful,—but why? Because it demonstrates (to those who have the courage) that we, living, are out of life,—utterly out of it. The mysteries of a universe made of drops of fire and clods of mud do not concern us in the least. The fate of a humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about. If you take it to heart it becomes an unendurable tragedy. If you believe in improve-

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ment you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence. . . ." This confession reads sincerely enough to refute his momentary claims of positive relish at the "spectacle," and goes far to explain the strain of his commitments to consolatory action. Despite the supernal beauty of his art, his tenacious resolve to pay justice with it to fidelity, endeavor and "the power of occult forces which rule the fascinating aspects of the visible world," Conrad was, at the heart, as dead as a cinder, organically insolvent.

III

The last outpost of his alienation was defended at the boundary of sex. It is a commonplace of criticism that his women are the more deficient members of his *dramatis personae*. With a very few exceptions, they are merely victims, merely madonnas or merely mates. His rhetorical insistence on their mysteriousness is tiresome and one is finally reminded, in facetious impatience, of Thurber's baffled male crouching athwart a couch and asking his lymphatic and sloe-eyed siren: "What do you want to be inscrutable *for,* Marcia?" No Conrad hero or heroine gets a fair chance at redemption through the sexual relationship; it simply does not enter the field of possibilities or, if it does, is quickly removed again, hidden from view. It is not only Mrs. Gould and Mrs. Travers who are sacrificed—lambs on the altars of their husbands' material ambitions—Aissa is sacrified to Willems' low-minded greed, Jewel to Lord Jim's high-minded ambition, Antonia and Linda to the vanities of Decoud and Nostromo, Haldin's sister to Razumov's shattered vindication, Lena to Heyst's inaction. In some cases, they are awarded poetic justice, like Winnie Verloc, whose desertion and suicide may be thought of as condign retribution for her ulterior marriage design. Sometimes, like Freya, women are part of the rewards to be forfeited by the erring male. Justifiable as these subordinations may appear in any single instance, there is unquestionably afoot here a compulsive sacrifice of women. They are expendable.

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It looks as if Conrad could not possibly involve his men in fruitful relationships with women for fear of having to describe the immediacies of those relationships, and he was no more at ease when the involvement was fruitless. *Amy Foster* is a vivid example of his inability to *write out* such a *contretemps*. The story has attracted favorable attention because of its compelling study of a creature tortured by isolation on a foreign shore, doubly compelling if viewed as a possible reflection of Conrad's exile. Yet it falls lamentably short of telling detail, precisely where that detail is needed, in the area of psychic violence that must have developed between Amy and Yanko before the latter's death. It may seem effrontery to wish a literary creation to have been fathered by another, but some themes seem to be the special property of those authors who best justify them, regardless of precedence; just as the situation of the double awaited its supreme embodiments in the novels of Dostoevsky and Conrad, so if ever there was a tale that should have been told by D. H. Lawrence it is *Amy Foster*. *Freya of the Seven Isles* is an unfortunate attempt to remedy the omissions of *Amy Foster*, for here, where Conrad tried to yield the actions rather than the effects of passion, he is melodramatic and unconvincing. *Chance* is the most colossal failure of opportunity in this direction. Guerard claims that in it Conrad for once chose sexual repression for a major theme. A condition or an outcome, if not a major theme, it certainly is; that Conrad consciously chose it is unlikely. It was thrust upon him by his own psychological celibacy. Following a highly complex resolution of cross-purposes, Captain Anthony and Flora de Barral (the most nearly realized portrait of a woman in Conrad's pages) are at last freed of their mutual barrier by the death of Flora's malignant father. Then, with no possible reason for continuity to falter, Conrad drowns Anthony, and young Powell (by now not-so-young) steps into his place on the last page. More than bad plotting, this is insensitive confusion. When added to the other gratuitous woman-handlings and crowned by Conrad's prudish explanation to Edward Garnett of Arlette's salvation in *The Rover*, it strengthens the supposition that Con-

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rad's insecurity before the vital possibilities and crises of sex was, to use the Freudian vocabulary, an aspect of his total libidinal insecurity.

Theoretically, the gaining of moral autonomy by the individual should return him to creative revision of his attachment to others. The concrescence never takes place, with any conviction, in Conrad's scheme. The victims of self-doubt in *The Secret Sharer* and *The Shadow Line* may be said symbolically to resume their fulfillments in the line of duty. However, in both these fables the isolation is no more finally conditioned by the relaxing urgencies of fellowship than anywhere else in Conrad's fiction. Conrad, one suspects, and therefore his characters, was forever unconnected, could only assert the obligations of connection verbally. This inhibition of the outgoing impulses partly vitiates the objectivity of his moral universe. Alienation is not of necessity a *condition humaine;* an artist who cares to demonstrate that it is must first exploit all the possibilities. Conrad failed to do so. His novels triumph in spite of their implications; their forms are secure from criticism where, at their surest, they invested the transitory terrors with the permanence of incandescent art. He once wrote that "there is no more evanescent quality in an accomplished fact than its wonderfulness," and if the general reader has begun to take him for granted it is because he has forgotten how unexcelled is Conrad's rendering of the modalities of the physical universe, how much, also, the development of modern novel-writing owes to his painfully exacted craftsmanship, especially, as Zabel averred, to "his imposition of the processes and structures of psychological experience . . . . on the form of the plot."

The implications of the content remain, to be continually tested. The most challenging measure of modern criticism is to determine whether or not, following F. Scott Fitzgerald's equation, the artist identifies himself with the objects of his horror and his compassion. Conrad's example not only predicted victories of analysis and method but also, whatever personal sources aggravated his case, the disorientation of the modern mind, re-

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corded, with fuller powers of self-consciousness and recognition, in the typical works of Mann, Proust and Gide. Western man has progressively stripped himself of all connection with the organic world and the result is a magnification, in special instances, of consciousness over being, generally and disastrously sexual attrition and desiccation of the sympathies and, on the popular level, a compensating confusion of ideas, a willful hysteria of maudlin purposes. "In the destructive element immerse" was an injunction to moral exploration and synthesis. For modern men there has been no greater freedom after releasing the secret sharer than there was before.

Classified by critics usually as a nineteenth-century skeptical traditionalist, Conrad is not radically separated from our contemporaries who, like him in this central respect, find the burden of consciousness too great because it is unqualified not so much by a sufficiently rational frame of reference as by a centrally emotional adhesion to the earth they live on, to the flesh they should unite with, to the interior world of empathy and passion which is the only abiding vehicle of our identity, our assurance.

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Two Poems

ANTHONY HECHT

As Plato Said

These public dances and other exercises of the young maidens naked, in the sight of the young men, were moreover incentives to marriage; and to use Plato's expression, drew them almost as necessarily by the attraction of love, as a geometrical conclusion is drawn from the premises.
—Plutarch

Although I do not know your name, although
It was a silly dance you did with apple flowers
Bunched in your hands after the racing games,
My friends and I have spent these several hours
Watching. Although I do not know your name,
I saw the sun dress half of you in shadow, and I saw
The wind water your eyes as though with tears
Until they flashed like newly-pointed spears.
This afternoon there was a giant daw
Turning above us—though I put no trust
In all these flying omens, being just
A plain man and a warrior, like my friends,—
Yet I seem mastered by uncommon force
And made to think of you, although it blends
Not with my humor, or the businesses
Of soldiering. I have seen a horse
Moving with more economy, and know
My aim is surer than a girl's promises.
But it is a compelling kind of law
Puts your design before me, even though
I put no faith or fancy in that daw
Turning above us. There's some rigor here,
More than in nature's daily masterpiece
That brings for us, with absolute and clear
Insistence, worms from their midnight soil,

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Tumultuous honk and trumpeting of geese
In the early morning, and at last the toil
Of soldiering. This is a simple code,
Far simpler than Lycurgus has set down.
The sheep come out of the hills, the sheep come down
When it rains, or gather under a tree,
And in the damp they stink most heartily.
Yet the hills are not so tough but they will yield
Brass for the kitchen, and the soft wet hair
Of the sheep will occupy some fingers. In the bottom fields
The herd's deposit shall assist the Spring
Out of the earth and up into the air.
No. There is not a more unbending thing
In nature. There's not a season or a bird can bring
You to my senses or so harness me
To my intention. Let the Helots mind
The barley fields, lest they should see a daw
Turning to perch on some adjacent tree
And fancy it their sovereign ruler. No.
However we are governed, it shall draw
Both of us to its own conclusion, though
I do not even know you by your name.

Japan

It was a miniature country once
To my imagination: Home of the Short,
And also the academy of stunts
        Where acrobats are taught
    The famous secrets of the trade:
    To cycle in the big parade
While spinning plates upon their parasols,
Or somersaults that do not touch the ground,
        Or tossing seven balls
In Most Celestial Order round and round.

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A child's quick sense of the ingenious stamped
All their invention: toys I used to get
At Christmas time, or the peculiar, cramped
Look of their alphabet.
Fragile and easily destroyed,
Those little boats of celluloid
Driven by camphor round the bathroom sink,
And delicate the folded paper prize
Which, dropped into a drink
Of water, grew up right before your eyes.

Now when we reached them it was with a sense
Sharpened for treachery compounding in their brains
Like mating weasels; our Intelligence
Said: the Black Dragon reigns
Secretly under yellow skin,
Deeper than dyes of atabrin
And deadlier. The War Department said:
Remember you are Americans; forsake
The wounded and the dead
At your own cost; remember Pearl and Wake.

And yet they bowed us in with ceremony,
Told us what brands of Sake were the best,
Explained their agriculture in a phoney
Dialect of the West,
Meant vaguely to be understood
As a shy sign of brotherhood
In the old human bondage to the facts
Of day to day existence. And like ants,
Signalling tiny pacts
With their antennae, they would wave their hands.

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At last we came to see them not as glib
Walkers of tightropes, worshippers of carp,
Nor yet a species out of Adam's rib
Meant to preserve its warp
In Cain's own image: they had crept
Into our sympathy by inept
Clutchings with chopsticks after single grains
Of rice, like sparrows pecking in debris,
And their fastidious pains
Made them more touching in their poverty.

Human endeavor clumsily betrays
Humanity. Their excrement served in this;
For, planting rice in water, they would raise
Schistosomiasis
Japonica, that enters through
The pores into the avenue
And orbit of the blood, where it may foil
The heart and kill, or settle in the brain.
This fruit of their nightsoil
Thrives in the skull, where it is called insane.

Now the quaint early image of Japan
That was so charming to me as a child
Seems like the bright design upon a fan,—
Of water rushing wild
On rocks that can be folded up,
A river which the wrist can stop
With a neat flip, revealing merely sticks
And silk of what had been a fan before,
And like such winning tricks,
It shall be buried in excelsior.

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Sir Rabbit

EUDORA WELTY

He looked around first one side of the tree and then the other. And not a word!

"Oh-oh. I know you, Mr. King McLain!" Mattie Will cried, but the impudence—which still seemed marvelous to her since she'd never laid eyes on him close or thought of opening her mouth to him—all the impudence was carried off on the batting spring wind. "I know the way you do." When it came down to it, scared or not, she wanted to show him she'd heard all about King McLain and his way. And scared or not, the air made her light-headed.

If it was Mr. King, he was, suddenly, looking around both sides of the tree at once—two eyes here and two eyes there, two little Adam's-apples, and all those little brown hands. She shut her eyes, then her mouth. She planted her hoe in front of her toes and stood her ground by the bait can, too old—fifteen—to call out now that something was happening, but she took back what she'd said.

Then as she peeped, it was two McLains that came out from behind the hickory nut tree. Mr. McLain's twins, his sons of course. Who would have believed they'd grown up?—or almost; for they were scared. They must be as old as herself, thought Mattie Will. People aren't prepared for twins having to grow up like ordinary people but see them always miniature and young somewhere. And here they were coming—the very spit of Mr. King their father.

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Mattie Will waited on them. She yawned—strangely, for she felt at that moment as though somewhere a little boat was going out on a lake, never to come back—to see two little meanies coming now that she'd never dreamed of, instead of the one that would have terrified her for the rest of her days.

Those twins were town boys. They had their own pop stand by the post office stile on Saturdays in summer. Out here in the country they had undone their knee buckles and came jingling. Their fair bangs lifted and fell in the soft downy light under the dark trees, then in the new spangle of green. It was like seeing people come headlong through sudden raindrops, splashed. They passed the dogwood tree, with its flowers so few you could still count them, it was so early in spring. They trotted down and up through the little gully like a pony pair that could keep time to music in the Ringling Brothers', touching shoulders until the last.

They made a tinkling circle around her. They didn't give her a chance to begin her own commotion, only lifted away her hoe that she stretched out and leaned it on the big vines. They didn't have one smile between them; instead, little matching frowns were furring their foreheads, so that she wanted to press them out with the flat of her finger.

One of the twins took hold of her by the apron sash and the other one ran under and she was down. One of them pinned her arms and the other one jumped her bare, naked feet. Biting their lips, they sat on her. One small hand, smelling of a recent lightning-bug (so early in the year?), blindfolded her eyes. The strong fresh smell of the place—which she had found first—came up and they rolled over on the turned up mold, where the old foolish worms were coming out in their blindness.

At moments the sun would take hold of their arms with a bold dart of light, or rest on their wetted, shaken hair, or splash over their pretty clothes like the torn petals of a sunflower. She felt the soft and babylike heads, and the nuzzle of little cool noses. Whose nose was whose? She might have felt more anger than confusion, except that to keep twins straight had fallen her lot.

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And it seemed to her that from now on, having a visit go the visitor's way would come before giving trouble. She who had kicked Old Man Flewellyn out of the dewberry patch, an old smiling man! She had set her teeth in a small pointed ear that had the fuzz of a peach, and did not bite. Then she rolled her head and dared the other twin, with her teeth at his ear, since they were all in this together, all in here equally now, where it had been quiet as moonrise to her, and now while one black crow after another beat his wings across a turned-over field no distance at all beyond.

When they sat up in a circle with their skinned knees propped up in the playing light that came down like a fountain, she and the McLain twins ate candy—as many sticks of candy as they felt like eating out of one paper sack for three people. The McLain twins had brought the sack away out here with them and had put it in a safe place ahead of time, as far from the scene as the pin oak—needlessly far. Their forethought cast a pall on all three as they sucked and held their candy in their mouths like old men's pipes. One crow hollered over their heads and they all got to their feet as though a clock had struck.

"Now."

What did it matter which twin said that word, like a little bark? It was the parting word. There was her hoe held up in a grandfather vine, gone a little further in its fall, and there was her bucket. After they'd walked away from her—backwards for a piece—then she, jumping at them to chase them off, screamed into the veil of leaves, "I just did it because your mama's a poor albino!"

She would think afterwards, married, when she had the time to sit down—churning, for instance—"Who had the least sense and the least care, for fifteen? They did. I did. But it wasn't fair to tease me. To try to make me dizzy, and run a ring around me, or make me think that first minute I was going to be carried off by their pa. Teasing because I had to open my mouth about Mr. King McLain before I knew what was coming."

Tumbling on the wet spring ground with the goody-goody

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McLain twins—who had since gone away, and were college boys somewhere, off—was something Junior Holifield would have given her a licking for, just for making such a story up, supposing, after she married Junior, she had put anything in words. Or he would have said he'd lick her for it if she told it *again*.

Poor Junior!

2.

"Oh, good afternoon, sir. Don't shoot me, it's King McLain. I'm in the habit of hunting these parts."

Junior had just knocked off a dead, double-headed pine cone and Blackstone was aiming at the telephone wire when the light voice with the fast words running together came out of the trees above the gully.

"Thought I'd see if the birds around here still tasted as sweet as they used to." And there he was—that is, he showed for a minute and then was gone behind a reddening sweetgum tree.

But fall coming or not, poor little quails weren't any of his business, with him darting around tree trunks in a starched white suit, even if he did carry a gun for looks, Mattie Will thought. She studied the empty arch between two trees with a far-sighted look. If that was Mr. King McLain, nobody was ever going to shoot him. Shoot *him?* Let him go on ahead in his Sunday best from one tree to another without giving warning or being so fussy about wild shots from the low scrub. He was Mr. King, all right. Up there back of the leaves his voice laughed and made fun this minute.

Junior looked up and said, "Well, we come out to use up some old ammunition." He lifted his upper lip. He had another pine cone on his mind. He pinged it.

"You hear me?" said the voice.

"It sure did look like Mr. McLain to me, Junior," Mattie Will whispered, pretending to be as slow as Junior was. She squinted against the small sun points that came at her cheeks through the braid of her hat. Then she pushed her way around her husband.

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"Well. And we come out to shoot up some old ammunition," Junior told her. "This is Saturday afternoon." He pulled her back.

"You boys been sighting any birds this way?" the white glimmer asked courteously, and then it passed behind another tree. "Seen my dog?" And the invisible mouth whistled, from east right around to west, they could hear the clean round of it. Mr. King even *whistled* with manners. And with familiarity. And what two men on earth whistle the same? Mattie Will believed she must have heard him and seen him closer-to than she thought. Nobody could have *told* her how sweet the old rascal whistled, but it didn't surprise her.

Warrin, the Holifield dog, flailed his tail and took a single bound toward the bank. Of course he had been barking the whole time, answered tolerantly by some dogs in town who—as certainly as if you could see them—were lying in front of the barbershop.

"Sighted e'er bird? Just one cuckoo," Junior said now, with his baby-mouth drawn down as if he would cry, which meant he was being funny, and so Blackstone, his distance behind in the plum thicket, hopped on one foot for Junior, but Junior said, "Be still, Blackstone, no call for you to start cutting up yet."

"No, sir. Never pass by these parts without bringing down a few plump, juicy birds for my supper," said the voice. It was faraway for the moment; Mr. McLain must have turned and looked at the view from the hill top. You could see all Battle Hill from there, and he could have picked out his own house.

"My name is Holifield. We was just out using up some old ammunition on Saturday, me and a nigger. And as long as you don't get no closer to us, we ain't liable to hit you," said Junior.

That echoed a little. They both happened to get behind gum trees just then, Mr. McLain and Junior. Junior was behind a tree! And she was between them. Mattie Will put her hand over her laughing mouth. Blackstone in the thicket broke a stick and chunked the pieces in the air. "And we won't pay a bit of attention what you do in your part of the woods," Junior said, a dignified gaze on the falling chips.

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"Suits me, sir!"

"Truth is—" Junior always kept right on! Just as he would do eating, at the table, and to his sorrow. "I ain't prepared to believe you come after birds, hardly, Mr. McLain, if it is you. *We* are the ones come after what birds they is, if they is any birds. You're trespassing."

"Trespassing," said the voice presently. "Well—don't shoot me for that interesting reason."

"Oho ho, Mr. Junior! Know what? *He* gawn shoot *us!* Shoot us!" In the ecstasy of knowing the end of it ahead of time, Blackstone flew out in the open and sang it like a bird, and beat his pants.

"You hush up, or if he don't shoot you, I will," Junior said. "Look, what happened to your gun, you lost it agin?"

Mr. McLain was moving waywardly along, and sometimes got as completely hidden by even a skinny little wild cherry as if he'd melted into it.

Ping!

"One more redbird," sighed Mattie Will.

"Ain't we two hunting men letting each other by and about their own business?" asked Mr. McLain, suddenly loud upon them. They saw part of him look out there at the head of the gully, one hand on a knee. "Look—this is the stretch of woods I always did like the best. Why don't you try a different stretch?"

"See *there?*"

Mr. McLain laughed agreeably at accusation.

"There's something else ain't what you think," Junior said in his most Holifield way. "There ain't e'er young lady folling after me, that you can catch a holt of—white or black."

Warrin spraddled right up the bank to Mr. McLain suddenly, before they knew it, and fawned on him before they got him back. He was named Warrin after Mr. Howard, who had printed Mattie Will's and Junior's marriage in the newspaper.

Mr. McLain withdrew, and Junior was patting Warrin, hammer-like.

"Junior," Mattie Will called softly through the cup of her

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hand. "Looks like you really scared that man away. *Wonder* who he was?"

"Bless God. Come out in the open, young lady. I can hear you but not see you," Mr. McLain called, appearing immediately from the waist up.

So poor Junior had got one thing right. Mr. McLain had been counting on it all the time—that young girl-wives not tied down yet could generally be found following after their husbands, if the husbands went out with a .22 on a nice enough day in October.

"Won't you come out and explain something mysterious to me, young lady?"

But it sounded as if he'd just thought of it, and called it mysterious.

Mattie Will, who was crouched to her knees, bent her head. She took a June bug off a leaf, a late June bug. She was thinking to herself, Mr. McLain must be up in years, and they said he never did feel constrained to live in Battle Hill like other people and just visited Mrs. McLain a little now and then. He roamed the country end on end, living up north and where-all, on funds; and might at any time appear and then, over night, disappear. Who could have guessed today he was this close?

"Show yourself, young lady. Are you a Holifield too? I don't think you are. Come out here and let me ask you something." But he went bobbing on to another tree while he was cajoling, bright as a lantern that swayed in a wind.

"Show yourself and I'll brain you directly, Mattie Will," Junior said. "You heard who he said he was and you done heard what he was, all your life, or you ain't a girl." Junior squeezed up to his .22 and trained it, immediately changing his voice to a little high singsong. "He's the one gits ever'thing he wants shootin' from around trees, like the McLains been doing since Time. Killed folks trespassin' when he was growin' up, or his pa did, if it so pleased him. McLains begun killin' when they begun settlin'. And don't nobody know how many chirren he has. Don't let him git no closer to me than he is now, you all."

Mattie Will ran the June bug up and down her arm and re-

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membered once when she was little and her mother and father had both been taken with the prevalent sickness, and it was Mrs. McLain from Battle Hill—who before that was only known by sight to them—who had come out to the farm and nursed and cooked for them, since there was nobody. She served them light-bread toast, and not biscuit, and didn't believe in molasses. She was not afraid of all the mud. She was in the congregation, always, a sweet-looking Methodist albino lady. Nothing was her fault. Mrs. McLain came by herself to church, without boy or man, her lace collar fastened down by a cluster-pearl pin just like a little ice cream spoon, loaded. Going down the aisle she held up her head for the benefit of them all, while they considered Mr. McLain a thousand miles away. And when they sang in church with her, they might as well have sung,

A thousand miles away,
A thousand miles away.

It made church holier.

"I'll just go up that little bank till I see what he's after, Junior," Mattie Will said, rising.

Junior just looked at her stubbornly.

She pinched him. "Didn't you hear him ask me a question? Don't be so country: I'm going to answer it. And who's trespassing, if it's not us all three and a nigger? This whole woods belongs to you know who, Old Lady Stark. She'd like to see us all in Coventry this minute." She pointed overhead without looking where the old signs said,

Posted.
No Pigs With or Without Rings.
No Hunting.
This Means You.
STARK

While he looked at those, Mattie Will picked her way up the bank. She was twenty-two years old and had been married six years.

"*You see?*" Junior cried again. "Yonder comes Mattie Will. It's just a good thing I got my gun too, Mr. McLain. You're so smart. I didn't even know you was near enough to flush out no

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way, Mr. McLain. Come on, Blackstone, let's me and you shoot him right now if he budges to catch a hold of Mattie Will, don't care what happens to us or who we hit, whether we both go to the 'lectric chair or not."

Mr. McLain then looked out from a pin oak and fired a load of buckshot down, the way he'd throw a bone. Mattie Will's tongue ran out too, to show Junior how he'd acted in public.

Blackstone was howling out from his plum thicket. "Now it be's our turn and I found my old gun and we done used up every bit of ammunition we had on turtles an' trash! You see, you see."

Mattie Will looked up at Mr. McLain and he beamed at her. He sent another load out, this one down over her where she held to some roots on the bank, and right over Junior's head.

It peppered his hat. Baby holes shamed it all over, like a blush. Junior threw away his gun.

Big red hand spread out on his shirt (he would always think he was shot through the heart if anybody's gun but his went off) Junior rose in the air and got a holler out. And then—he seemed determined about the way to come down, like Mister Holifield out of a wagon; no man more set in his ways than he, even Mister Holifield—he kicked and came down backwards. There was a fallen tree, a big fresh-cut magnolia some good-for-nothing had amused himself chopping down. Across that Junior decided to light, instead of on the green moss—head and body on one side of the tree, legs and feet on the other. Then he went limp from the middle out, before their eyes. He was dead to the world; as immune as if asleep in his pew, but bent the opposite way.

Mr. McLain appeared on top of the gully, wearing a yellowy panama hat and a white linen suit with the sleeves as ridgy as two washboards. He looked like the preternatural month of June. He came light of foot and let his gunstock trail carefree through the periwinkle, which would bind it a little and then let go.

He went to Junior first, taking the bank in three or four knee-deep steps down.

He bent over and laid his ear to Junior. He thumped him, like a melon he tested, and let him lie—too green. As if lighting a

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match from his side, he drew a finger down Junior's brown pants leg, and stepped away. Mr. McLain's linen shoulders, white as a goose in the sun, shrugged and twinkled in the glade.

To his back, he was not so very big, not so flashy and splendid as, for example, some brand-new evangelist come into-the-midst. He turned around and threw off his hat, and showed a thatch of straight, biscuit-colored hair. He smiled. His puckered face was like a little boy's, with square brown teeth.

Mattie Will slid down the bank. Mr. McLain stood with head cocked while the wind swelled and blew across the top of the ridge, turning over the green and gold leaves high up around them all, stirring along suspicions of burning leaves and gunpowder smoke and the juice of the magnolia, and then he dropped his gun flat in the vines. Mattie Will saw he was coming now.

"Turn *your* self around and start picking plums!" she called, joining her hands, and Blackstone turned around, just in time.

When she laid eyes on Mr. McLain close, she staggered, he had such grandeur, and then she was caught by the hair and brought down as suddenly to earth as if whacked by an unseen shillelagh. Presently she lifted her eyes in a lazy dread and saw those eyes above hers, as keenly bright and unwavering and apart from her life as the flowers on a tree.

But he put on her, with the affront of his body, the affront of his sense too. No pleasure in that! She had to put on what he knew with what he did—maybe because he was so grand it was a thorn to him. Like submitting to another way to talk, she could answer to his burden now, his whole blithe, smiling, superior, frantic existence. And no matter what happened to her, she had to remember, disappointments are not to be borne by Mr. McLain or he'll go away again.

Now he clasped her to his shoulder, and her tongue tasted sweet starch for the last time. Her arms dropped back to the mossiness, and she was Mr. McLain's Doom, or Mr. McLain's Weakness, like the rest, and neither Mrs. Junior Holifield nor Mattie Will Oliver; now she was something she had always heard of. She did not stir.

Then when he let her fall and walked off, when he was out of

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hearing in the woods, and the birds and woods-sounds and the woodchopping throbbed clearly, she lay there on one elbow, wide awake. A dove feather came shining and turning down through the light that was like golden smoke. She caught it with a dart of the hand, and brushed her chin; she was never displeased to catch anything. Nothing more fell.

But she moved. She was the mover in the family. She jumped up. Besides, she heard plums falling into the bucket—sounds of pure complaint by this time. She threw Blackstone a glance. He picked plums and had a lizard to play with, and his cap unretrieved from his first sailing delight still hung in a tree. The Holifield dog licked Blackstone on the seat patch and then trotted over and licked Junior on the stone-like hand, and looked back over his shoulder with the expression of a lady soloist to whose song nobody has really listened. For ages he might have been making a little path back and forth between Junior and Blackstone, but she could not think of his name.

She didn't call a one of them, man or dog, to his senses. There was Junior suspended dead to the world over a tree that was big enough around for two of him. He was hooped in the middle like the bridge over Little Chunky. Fools could set foot on him, walk over him. Even a young mule could run across him, the one he wanted to buy. His old brown pants hung halfway up his legs, and there in his poky middle pitifully gleamed the belt buckle anybody would know him by, even in a hundred years. J for Junior. A pang reached her, and she took a step. It could be he was scared more than half to death—but no, not with that sleeping face, still with its look of "How come?" And how much time there was left!

"Let the church bells wake him!" said Mattie Will to Warrin. "Ain't tomorrow Sunday? Blackstone, you have to climb up for your cap."

In the woods she heard sounds, the dry creek beginning to run or a strange man calling, one or the other, she thought, but she walked right up on Mr. McLain again, asleep—snoring. He slept sitting up with his back against a tree, his head pillowed in the

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luminous panama, his snorting mouth drawn round in a perfect heart open to the green turning world around him.

She stamped her foot, nothing happened, then she approached softly, and down on hands and knees contemplated him. Her hair fell over her eyes and she steadily blew a part in it; her head went back and forth appearing to say "No." Of course she was not denying a thing in this world, but now had time to look at anything she pleased and study it.

With her almost motherly sway of the head and arms to help her, she gazed at the sounding-off, sleeping head, and the neck like a little porch column in town, at the one hand, the other hand, the bent leg and the straight, all those parts looking no more driven than her man's now, or of any more use than a heap of cane thrown up by the mill and left in the pit to dry. But they were, and would be. He snored as if all the frogs of spring were inside him. But to him an old song. Or to him little balls, little bells for the light air, that rose up and sank between his two hands, never to be let fall.

His coat hung loosely out from him, and a letter suddenly dropped outward from a pocket—whiter than white.

Mattie Will subsided forward onto her arms. Her rear stayed up in the sky, which seemed to brush it with little feathers. She lay there and listened to the world go round.

But presently Mr. McLain leaped to his feet, bolt awake, with a flourish of legs. He looked horrified—that he had been seen asleep? and by Mattie Will? And he did not know that there was nothing she could or would take away from him—Mr. King McLain?

In the night time,
At the right time,
So I've understood,
'Tis the habit of Sir Rabbit
To dance in the wood—

That was all that went through Mattie Will's head.

"What you doing here, girl?" Mr. McLain beat his snowy arms up and down. "Go on! Go on off! Go to Guinea!"

She got up and skedaddled.

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She pressed through a haw thicket and through the cherry trees. With a tree-high seesawing of boughs a squirrel chase ran ahead of her through the woods. Fat birds were rocking on their perches. A little quail ran on the woods floor. Down an arch cut through, where Old Lady Stark had at last, they said, given in to the timber merchants, and where, sure enough, inroad had begun, Mattie Will could look away into the big West there. She could see the drift of it all, the stretched land below and the Big Black, the Stark place plain and the fields, and their farm, everybody's house above trees, the McLain's—the white floating peak—and even Blackstone's grannie's cabin, where there had been a murder one time. And Battle Hill all in rays, like a giant sunflower in the dust of Saturday.

But as she ran down through the woods and vines, this side and that, on the way to get Junior home, it stole back into her mind about those two gawky boys, the McLain twins. They were soft and jumpy! That day, with their brown, bright eyes popping and blinking, and their little aching Adam's-apples—they were like young deer, or even remoter creatures . . . kangaroos. . . . For the first time Mattie Will thought they were mysterious and sweet—gamboling now she knew not where.

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A Billet in the Lake Shore Forge

REUEL DENNEY

Cause without cause calls for such management
Downtown might give it up. And the smoky valley
Where a red-wing blackbird, late, flies past the stacks,
Might well forget it, turning to the juke
Or down at Harry's Good Time, in the slot,
Relax with chance—a play, if not a pay.
Man is a meaning armed who flies unaimed.

The tool is on its edge. I hear the lathe
Singing all night, blue light, to its pale shaving.
Men come and go among the grander mechanisms.
Even in sleep they know. Even in dreams they tend
The fire that begins, toward a cool end,
The ingot with a tress of flame. How do we spend
When the hot element, in flame whiteness,
Speaks in its temper of a hardness turned?

The ore streams from the lode, the heart of hardness,
Into the rail that runs into the heaven,
Into the bar the sharpened cutter turns,
Into the bullet. The fire is a bird
That beats warm wings upon the armorer's leaven.
The autumn leaf is falling across the furnace.
The metal stars turn where a truth aspires.
Dream draws out steel. Soul, spin with steely wires.

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*Reaction as Progress: or, The Devil's Domain**

JOSEPH FRANK

TO THE UNRIVALLED LIST of his great works, Thomas Mann has now added, in *Dr. Faustus,* a masterpiece of baroque grandeur. Mann himself, in a letter to a German friend, has called it his "wildest" book, in whose light the *Joseph* novels appear an "operatic pleasantry." Certainly, the pressure of our times, the pressure of the crisis in modern Western culture, has never before made itself felt in Mann's writings with such grandiose passion; and the present book may well be the work in which that crisis receives its most self-conscious and comprehensive artistic expression. That it should have obtained only grudging praise so far from most American critics, who considered it a cumbersome but nonetheless imposing political allegory, was perhaps inevitable as a first impression. A book taking its cue from the Faust myth, and modelled on Goethe?—The tragic tensions of the German cultural psyche?—What did that have to do with us? Not very much, to tell the truth; and it hardly seemed worth the trouble to wade through five hundred solid pages—even pages such as these, packed with fascinating glimpses into all fields of art and learning—to discover that something was wrong, desperately wrong, with the German soul.

Thomas Mann, however, is hardly the man to be content with writing political allegories. And it will surprise none of his readers to learn that while the life and work of Adrian Leverkühn, the protagonist of the novel, has obvious analogies with the political fate of Germany, it has somewhat less obvious but far more important analogies with the despairing involutions of Western culture in the last thirty years. No, let us not deceive

**Doctor Faustus,* by Thomas Mann, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter. Alfred A. Knopf. $3.50.

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ourselves; because Thomas Mann invokes the Devil in Luther's German, it would be folly and false pride to think that he holds no temptations for those raised elsewhere than among the medieval towers of an old-German city. For as in all great works of art, Thomas Mann begins by immersing himself in the national and the particular, only to break though, in the end, to the level of the supra-national and the human—the level on which literature becomes universal, and on which Occidental man and his culture become implicated in Adrian Leverkühn's fate. Only on this level can we begin to understand the complex but brilliantly effective symbolism that Thomas Mann employs in this overpowering work.

This symbolism, it must be emphasized, has nothing whatever to do with Goethe's *Faust*. Mann uses the skeleton of the original Faust legend, not the legend as reworked by Goethe, as a loose framework for the novel; and one element of the original legend, the despair of Faust when the time comes to surrender his soul, is important for Mann's concluding section. Precisely this element of the original, however, is the direct opposite of the Goethean version, proving that any attempt to interpret *Dr. Faustus* in terms of Goethe can only lead to confusion. Marlowe's *Faustus,* with its vivid sense of hell and damnation, is far closer to Thomas Mann in this respect than Goethe, whose Mephistopheles is a sly dog, not without charm, greatly appreciative that God, "der Alte," condescends to have a chat with him occasionally. But the key to *Dr. Faustus* cannot be found in learned excursions into the history of the Faust legend or comparative studies of its employment; it is to be found primarily in the book itself, and secondarily in various essays of Mann. Of these latter, three are especially noteworthy: a study, written before 1929, on Freud's place in cultural history (not to be confused with the later essay written in honor of Freud's eightieth birthday), a lecture called "Germany and the Germans" delivered in 1945 while Mann was still at work on *Dr. Faustus,* and a similar lecture given in 1947 on "Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Light of Contemporary Events."

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The pivotal cultural problem of the present, we find Mann writing in the early Freud study, had been entirely foreshadowed by the prophetic genius of Nietzsche; so that "all its [the present's] conflicts and convulsions seem like a satyr-play and a ludicrous repetition of his spiritual experiences reduced to an everyday scale . . . in him, through him, they had been decided long ago in the grand manner." In this essay, Mann was referring to some latter-day German intellectuals, who, looking back with longing to a past securely cradled in the irrational and mythical, set themselves up as the forerunners of the future, the advance-guard of a vital, instinctual dynamism destined to triumph over an atrophied rationalism and an insipid humanism. "Reaction as progress," Mann wrote, "progress as reaction, this interweaving is an ever-recurring historical phenomenon." Long before Mann dreamed that he would ever write a novel called *Dr. Faustus,* the figure of Nietzsche had become his symbol for the inversions of this historical dialectic. And when the fate of German culture, hopelessly enmeshed in this dialectic, impelled Mann to write his *Dr. Faustus,* he accordingly chose to fashion Adrian Leverkühn after Nietzsche: the model whose own fate had prefigured that of German culture "in the grand manner," and on an incomparably more exalted plane. Similarly, in "Germany and the Germans," Mann gives us the theme of *Dr. Faustus*—though without saying so, for the book had not been published yet—in words that seem to echo across almost twenty years, and show from what deep well of the creative unconscious Mann drew his inspiration. "Wherever arrogance of the intellect mates with the spiritual obsolete and archaic," Mann declares, "there is the Devil's domain." The kinship between these quotations should be obvious, except that now "reaction as progress," the unholy marriage of intellectual arrogance and the spiritually obsolete, is indissolubly linked with the Devil; and it is inevitable that he should emerge from the chthonic depths, to take possession of those who, whether unwittingly or no, have sought for salvation by invoking the dark forces he controls. As we shall see, the necessity of this

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linkage between the Devil and Adrian Leverkühn controls the inner symbolic structure of *Dr. Faustus.*

At the outset, we are introduced to the narrator, Serenus Zeitblom, a life-long friend of Leverkühn and a teacher of the classics, who sits down to write the story of his friend just as Hitler's Fortress Europa was beginning to crumble under the Allied assaults. The choice of his profession, like every detail in Mann, is not accidental: Zeitblom, to the best of his somewhat limited abilities, upholds the standpoint of "a religiously tinged humanism, conditioned by a feeling for the transcendental mystery of man, by a proud consciousness that he is no mere biological being, but that a decisive part of him belongs to an intellectual and spiritual world . . ." Zeitblom, then, is the most important embodiment of the "human" in *Dr. Faustus,* and like Mann's other embodiments of the same complex of values—like Settembrini in *The Magic Mountain*—he is lightly caricatured into a touching and sympathetic but hardly inspiring figure. For Mann, with the majestic impartiality of the great artist, portrays the "human" —though he is himself its advocate—according to the somewhat mediocre position assigned it in the hierarchy of the spirit. Compared to the ecstasies of the divine and the orgies of the demonic, the classical *via media* of the "human" is apt to appear distressingly timid and, to use the most damning word of all, bourgeois; to appear, indeed, exactly like Serenus Zeitblom—well-meaning, ineffectual, fussily pedantic, and altogether unexciting. But Zeitblom is a decent human being, who had the courage to retire from his teaching post rather than accept Nazi doctrine; and by casting him as narrator, Mann is enabled to impose the perspective of the "human" on Leverkühn's adventures into a far from human realm.

Besides Zeitblom's description of himself, the early chapters sketch in Leverkühn's brilliant, superior and mockingly distant personality, as well as the cultural ambiance that shaped his development. The tone of the uncanny and mysterious is first struck by Mann in recounting the experiments in biology and natural

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science carried on as a hobby by Leverkühn's father. Hovering on the uncertain borderline between the organic and inorganic, between animate and inanimate nature, where the two seem to become one, these, as Zeitblom remarks, in other periods "would have been suspect as a leaning to the black arts." In the depiction of the old-German town where Leverkühn grew up, and where "something still hung on the air from the spiritual constitution of the men of the last decades of the fifteenth century," this note is reinforced. But the major symbolism, derived from the history of music, is first clearly announced in the chapter* detailing the remarkable lectures of Wendell Kretschmar, town organist and Leverkühn's music teacher.

Critics in this country have deplored Mann's use of this symbolism, claiming that it could be understood only by those with advanced technical equipment, and that, as a result, the meaning of the novel has been obscured. Whatever the merit of this charge (the present writer, who has no musical equipment of any kind, had little difficulty following the symbolism on a second reading), Mann's choice seems inevitable if we consider the esthetics of music in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, his acknowledged mentors, and the symbolic rôle music has long played for Mann as a clue to the German *Seele*. For Schopenhauer, music is the pure expression of the metaphysical reality of the Will, not, like the other arts, merely an imitation of the appearances through which the Will objectifies itself; for Nietzsche, in the Schopenhaurian period of his *Birth of Tragedy,* music is the language of the Dionysian revel, the art that gives voice to the *Ur-Schmerz,* the primeval pain at the heart of reality: and, even more appositely, the form in which "the orgiastic agitations of a people immortalize themselves." Writing his *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* during the first World War, Thomas Mann called Germany "the unliterary land," whose innermost soul expressed itself in music, the language of feelings, rather than in words—the language of reason. And Settembrini, the loquacious

*This chapter appeared in the Autumn, 1948, issue of *The Hudson Review* under the title "Lectures of Wendell Kretschmar."

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humanist in *The Magic Mountain,* calls music "politically suspect" because all it does is to "kindle the emotions, whereas what concerns us is to awaken the reason"; while Hans Castorp's typically German love for music is linked to his sympathy with disease and death, his willing abandonment to the siren song of the irrational. Seen in this light, we realize that Mann's preference for music symbolism is itself of the very essence of his theme.

Through Wendell Kretschmar's lectures, Leverkühn first comes into contact with the dialectic of "reaction as progress" as it had worked itself out in the history of music. Beethoven, in the works of his middle period, transformed the conventions of the classical musical forms, according to Kretschmar, by "consuming them in the personal expression, melting them into the subjective dynamic"; yet in the late works, "convention often appeared . . . in a baldness, one might say exhaustiveness, an abandonment of self, with an effect more majestic and awful than any reckless plunge into the personal." For here, "the merely personal—which had after all been the surmounting of a tradition already brought to its peak—once more outgrew itself in that it entered into the mythical, the collectively great and supernatural." This distinction is linked to that between harmonic subjectivity and polyphonic objectivity, and in another lecture, on Beethoven and the Fugue, its consequences are developed. The fugue is the form of polyphonic objectivity, of music in the service of the Church—the very antithesis of Beethoven's all-consuming harmonic subjectivity. But although reputed to be unable to write a proper fugue by his contemporaries, Beethoven, in his last years, carried on a harrowing battle with this form (a battle starkly illustrated by the story of how he raged over the fugue in his *Missa Solemnis* all through one night)—and emerged triumphant; the greatest exponent of harmonic subjectivity, of the personal and individual, betrayed in this way the longing of music to return to its churchly origins, to transcend its own subjectivity and fuse once again with the mythical and the collective. (Unfortunately, the translator, for some unknown rea-

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son, has seen fit to omit at this point the three pages of the original that explain this most clearly). Leverkühn is particularly struck with the thought, after listening to Kretschmar, that art might one day cease to be self-sustaining, and "retreat from its present role to a more modest, happier one in the service of a higher union, which did not need to be, as it once was, the Church."

When Leverkühn at first chooses to study theology instead of pursuing his interest in music, Zeitblom understands why: "His choice had been influenced by . . . the wish to reduce music again to the position that once, in times he considered happier, she had held in her union with a religious cult." Leverkühn, though, eventually finds theology, as, in his arrogance of intellect, he had found everything else, to be "a perfect legion of ludicrous absurdities"; under Kretschmar's urgings, he abandons theology for music, though not without misgivings. For with genuine anguish of spirit he asks: "Why does almost everything seem to me like its own parody? Why must I think that almost all, no, all the methods and conventions of art today *are good for parody only?*" The answer, of course, is that he is an original genius, emerging at the end of an exhausted tradition; free and spontaneous creation within its bounds is no longer possible. This tradition, as Leverkühn had grasped intuitively from the very first, was, in music, that of harmonic subjectivity, which had accompanied the rise of bourgeois individualism and the freeing of culture from religious affiliations. That had now run its course: if the artist did not wish to content himself with parody, if he wanted to "break through" to a new basis for positive expression, he would have to search elsewhere. This is Leverkühn's problem, as it is the problem of all modern art; and his solution is also not unfamiliar to modern artists.

To state it baldly, Leverkühn goes to the medieval past, to the mythical, the collective, the irrational, to fuse it dialectically with his own radical creative demands in such a way that the archaic and revolutionary become one. This fusion is accomplished, on the plane of musical technique, by Leverkühn's fictitious inven-

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tion of Schoenberg's atonality. Regardless of technical details, the symbolic function of this method of composing is clear: it imposes an objective structure on music that rigidly controls both melody and harmony in a manner paralleling, without duplicating, the "strict style" of Church polyphony. The harmonic subjectivity, the freedom, of the atonal composer is thus negated; but at the same time, in relation to harmonic convention, his music sounds wildly iconoclastic. "More interesting phenomena," Leverkühn explains to Zeitblom, "probably always have this double face of past and future, probably are always progressive and regressive in one." Leverkühn, therefore, has combined the arrogance of his original genius with the spiritually obsolete: he has entered the Devil's domain.

This domain, roughly delimited, comprises all the irrational, instinctual, inhuman forces that threaten the precarious equilibrium of the "human" at every turn. These forces are symbolized both historically and, so to speak, ontologically, as permanent attributes of being. The shadows of the Reformation and the Middle Ages that play about Leverkühn's youth, and which are evoked with such frightening plasticity in connection with his theological schooling, place us in a world where the irrational as supernatural was completely dominant: where those who had trafficked with demons gladly went to the stake, thanking their executioners, as the flames curled up around them, for saving their souls. Ontologically, the irrational is always present in the instinctual, the animal, the primitive, particularly as these focus in the sexual; and Leverkühn's pact with the demonic is sealed by a sexual embrace which, as in the case of Nietzsche, culminates in the syphilitic infection of his brain. Another stratum of the irrational is Nature itself, first as symbolized in the experiments of Leverkühn's father and then, in later sections, by Leverkühn's account of his imaginary descent into the ocean in a diving bell and his astronomical speculations. The grotesque monsters of the deep, the incomprehensibly vast distances of interstellar space, the bewildering conception of an exploding universe receding at a rate of speed "compared to which the splintering of a bursting

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shell was at a snail's pace"—all this is irrational in the sense of being extra-human, incapable of reduction to the human scale. Submerged in the immensity of this unimaginable chaos, the vantage-point of the "human" appears a pitiable pretense; Zeitblom protests that this kind of Nature "could not stir one to a feeling of the majesty of God or give rise to any moral elevation. It all looked very much more like devil's juggling." Nevertheless, it is to the values of the irrational on all these levels that Leverkühn is drawn. They provide the emotional dynamism that enables his original genius to escape the fate of sterility, of being merely "critique" and parody, and to break through to a new source of creative expression compounded of the archaic and the revolutionary. In placing this process at the center of his symbolism, Thomas Mann has performed the unprecedented feat of lifting to the level of sovereign art the most burning problem of modern art itself—the dialectic of "reaction as progress" to which all of twentieth-century culture has been exposed, and to whose temptations, in large part, the greatest exemplars of modern art have succumbed.

The first half of the book is devoted to tracing Adrian Leverkühn's surrender to the demonic. At the mid-point of the novel, when the surrender has been effectuated both physically (by Leverkühn's contraction of syphilis) and musically (by the invention of atonality, with its reminiscences of early Church music), the Devil in person appears in what Leverkühn tries to convince himself is a feverish hallucination. In the passionate dialogue between the two—one of the highest points of this towering work—all the symbolic levels are gathered together, and Leverkühn learns, from the lips of the supreme authority, the secret bond between his illness and his musical discoveries; he learns, too, the terrible price he will have to pay for the Devil's gifts. Twenty-four years are given him in which to create those remarkable works that press so far forward (or backward) along the path he has chosen; since he is pledged to the inhuman, however, he must create them in icy solitude, for the normal love of other humans is denied him; and when the "hour-glass" has run

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out, when his allotted time-span has elapsed, his soul belongs to the Devil.

From this point on, the novel widens out into a picture of German culture from the period immediately preceding the first World War up through the final triumph of the values of the irrational in the Third Reich. This section of the book is, in a literal sense, Thomas Mann's spiritual autobiography, where he pitilessly weaves in tragic incidents from his own family life (the suicide of his sister, for example, is recounted, even to the exact reprinting of her suicide note, in the death of Clarissa Rodde), and settles accounts with the Munich intelligentsia among whom he lived for so many years. Here, the work takes on the character of a *Schlüsselroman*, with Mann satirizing real figures under concealed names, or, as in the case of the Baron von Gleichen-Russwurm, the descendant of Schiller, not even bothering to invent a pseudonym. The most prominent of these figures in German culture, though not in the book itself, is the poet Daniel zur Höhe —a heavily burlesqued portrait, if we are not mistaken, of Stefan George. In the conversations of these intellectuals and artists, who dote on Sorel's *Réflexions sur la violence*, who are enamored of the creative superiority of an irrational myth over outmoded ideas like justice and truth, and who are no doubt the very persons against whom Mann wrote his first essay on Freud, we see the gradual triumph of the values of the irrational in the same dialectic fusion of the archaic and revolutionary first ennobled by Leverkühn's genius.

The complacent flirtation of these gentlemen with the demonic, however, is far removed from the spiritual torments of a Leverkühn. In Mann's essay on Nietzsche, he refers to the latter's life as "mythologically speaking the union of Dionysus with the Crucified"; and as the book proceeds, it is the aspect of "the Crucified" that comes into prominence. Leverkühn's pact with the demonic, though he accepts it as his destiny, leads both to physical suffering—whose agonizing symptoms follow those described by Nietzsche in his letters—and to the inner wrestlings of his god-forsaken conscience. In the profoundly moving ac-

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counts of Leverkühn's musical compositions, these inner conflicts receive a subtle poetic expression, each detail of which is calculated, with consummate art, to bring out some facet of his steadily intensifying tragic mockery and defiance of the "human", his self-hatred and his despair. Since the interpolation of these compositions has proven a major stumbling block for most writers on *Dr. Faustus,* it would be tempting to analyze them in detail; to show how, aside from being masterly verbal creations in their own right, they serve as a perfect symbolic focus for each new stage in Leverkühn's suicidal descent into the demonic depths. But we shall have to limit ourselves, in this preliminary study, to the last and most important of all, a massive cantata called *The Lamentations of Dr. Faustus,* in which, as Leverkühn expresses it, he wished to "take back" Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its tremendous "human" paean to the brotherhood of humanity.

The immediate cause for this resolve, within the narrative structure, is the death of Leverkühn's nephew, little Echo, whose cherubic grace and infantile solemnity inspire Mann to some of the most unaffectedly lyrical pages he has ever written; and who captures not only his uncle's heart, but that of the reader as well. Leverkühn's love for Echo, however, transgresses the demonic prohibition that his life shall be bare of the warmth of human love. When the little boy dies a horrible death in the throes of spinal meningitis, Leverkühn, attributing this to the Devil's revenge, blames himself for a disastrous indulgence. This crushing blow wrings from Leverkühn a gigantic cry of despair—the antithesis of the Ninth Symphony—whose text is based on Faust material he has been gathering for some time, but in which "echo, the favorite device of the baroque, is employed with unspeakably mournful effect." And the work, too, constitutes Leverkühn's final break-through to pure expressiveness, although it is built more strictly on atonal principles than any of his earlier compositions. The very rigidity of its structure, the complete surrender of harmonic freedom, allows the composer, by a dialectical paradox, to take technique for granted and "yield himself to subjectivity"; the uttermost constraint, as once before, when

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Western music was in its infancy, resolves itself into "the free language of feeling, the birth of freedom from bondage"; although now, "the dialectic process appears endlessly more miraculous and amazing than at the time of the madrigalists." But we cannot forbear quoting Mann's concluding words about this composition, which hint at another paradox beside the musical one:

> No, this dark tone-poem permits up to the very end no consolation, appeasement, transfiguration. But take our artist paradox: grant that expressiveness—expression as lament—is the issue of the whole construction: then may we not parallel with it another, a religious one, and say too (though only in the lowest whisper) that out of the sheerly irremediable hope might germinate? It would be but a hope beyond hopelessness, the transcendence of despair—not betrayal of her, but the miracle that passes belief. For listen to the end, listen with me: one group of instruments after another retires, and what remains, as the work fades on the air, is the high G of a cello, the last word, the last fainting sound, slowly dying in a pianissimo-fermata. Then nothing more: silence, and night. But that tone which vibrates in the silence, which is no longer there, to which only the spirit hearkens, and which was the voice of mourning, is so no more. It changes its meaning; it abides as a light in the night.

To understand what is meant by the religious paradox paralleling the musical one, we must go back to a bit of theological sparring between Leverkühn and the Devil in their fateful interview. Taunting the Devil with the idea that it may be possible to achieve salvation, even though the Devil is convinced that Leverkühn's pride will forever prevent him from true remorse, Leverkühn develops the audacious idea of a "prideful *contritio*." "The *contritio* without hope, as complete disbelief in the possibility of mercy and forgiveness,"—he points out to the Devil, whom he taxes with a certain shallowness in theology—"the rocklike firm conviction of the sinner that he has done too grossly for even the Everlasting Goodness to forgive his sin—only that is the true *contritio*. I call your attention to the fact that it is the nighest to redemption, for Goodness the most irresistible of all." To which the Devil replies: "And where will the likes of you

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get the single-mindedness, the naive recklessness of despair, which would be the premise of this sinfull waye to salvacion?" The answer is plain—in the almost unbearable cruelty of angelic little Echo's death. By abandoning himself recklessly to this despair, by negating his freedom to believe even in the very possibility of redemption—exactly as he had negated his freedom to compose harmonically—Leverkühn breaks through to a human feeling of world-embracing pity from which all trace of arrogance has been removed, just as no trace of parody is left in the expressive despair of the music. And this is the light abiding in the night of Leverkühn's madness, faintly illuminating his wasted features, from which all intelligence has fled, with the aura of martyrdom.

In this inadequate recapitulation of the novel*, which can only meagerly convey the luxuriance of its symbolic texture, we have confined ourselves to the level on which Leverkühn's temptation is that of modern culture itself. It is hardly possible any longer to overlook the union, in modern art, of the most daring intellectual and esthetic modernity with a growing need to find a new adjustment to the values of the irrational. And this need, more often than not, expresses itself in precisely the same adoption of some past anti-individualist, anti-humanist ideal that we have seen in Leverkühn. So pertinent is Mann's symbolism to this pervasive tendency of modern culture, that exact correspondences, even on the plane of esthetic form, may be found all through contemporary art. The loss of perspective in modern painting, for example, which Mann pointedly mentions in passing, forms a per-

*A word should be said about the translation. On the whole, as might be expected from her previous versions of Mann's work, Mrs. H. T. Lowe-Porter does a first-rate job. There are signs, however, that an understandable haste to make the work available to English readers prevented Mrs. Lowe-Porter from giving *Dr. Faustus* the final polish of earlier books. Far too often, the meaning of a sentence is made opaque by an over-literal rendition of the German into English. An example, which occurs in several places, is the German idiom, "seinen Mann stehen." This is translated, with impeccable accuracy, as "to stand his man"; the only trouble is, it makes no sense in English. An adequate translation, however, exists in several English idioms, such as "hold one's ground" or "stand one's ground."

It is to be hoped, when a second English edition of *Dr. Faustus* appears, that Mrs. Lowe-Porter will take the opportunity to correct these oversights, which add needless difficulty to an already formidable work. Also, in fairness to the English reader, the cuts should be restored. Anyone who reads the five hundred pages of the present work will not be daunted by five or six more; and he should get the benefit of every assistance provided by the author.

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fect parallel to the symbolic significance attributed to atonality: like Leverkühn, modern artists have voluntarily adopted the technical limitations of primitive and medieval art to achieve their revolutionary creative freedom. (The growing influence of Kafkaesque allegory in modern literature undoubtedly is the same type of reversion). If we do not seek for formal analogies, but turn to the ideals inspiring the work of our great modern writers, the relevance of Mann's symbolism thrusts itself upon us no less forcibly. In English literature alone, we might list Yeats, with his Irish folklore and home-baked theosophy; Eliot, with his Christian mysticism and his ideal of a traditional Christian community modelled on the medieval; Auden, with his recent conversion to the Kierkegaardian theology of paradox and *Angst;* best of all, perhaps, D. H. Lawrence, with his worship of the "dark gods." By naming these writers in this connection, we do not, of course, intend to imply any value judgement on their works. But does not all this testify to what Mann had sensed as far back as 1922, when he wrote his spacious study of *Goethe and Tolstoy?*—namely, that an epoch was ending, "the middle-class, humanist, liberal [epoch], which, born in the Renaissance, came to power in the French Revolution, and whose last death-agonies and convulsions we are living through." In Nietzsche's life, Mann found the inevitable outline for Leverkühn's monumental enactment of these death-agonies:—Nietzsche, who labelled the rationalization of myth the murder of true culture and the beginning of decadence; who saw his eternal enemy in Socrates, the prototype of "theoretical Man," for whom virtue was knowledge rather than immersion in the tragic wisdom of the Dionysian ecstasy; and yet, who confessed in a letter to a friend: "My life now consists in the wish that all things might be different than I conceive them, and that someone will make me disbelieve my 'truths.' "

Thomas Mann has quoted with approval the remark of an important Swiss critic, Emil Staiger, that *Dr. Faustus* must be awarded a special place among Mann's other works because of the passion filling its pages. Clearly, this passion gives the book an emotional *chiaroscuro* far different from the bland poise of Mann's

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earlier writings. Here is no longer the supreme ironist, playing off Nature and Spirit against each other from his appointed position as spokesman for "das Pathos der Mitte," the pathos of the center; here is a heartsick witness, writing, like Zeitblom, with trembling hand, the inner tragedy of his country, his people—and perhaps his time. Despite this difference in tone, there are, to be sure, multiple connections between *Dr. Faustus* and Thomas Mann's other works. Practically every page he has written appears to enter the novel in some way—or so at least it seemed to me, leafing through the volumes at hand.* For our purpose, however, it will be enough to block in only a rough perspective. What should be stressed, in my opinion, is the triumphant originality of *Dr. Faustus* as an individual work; not its dove-tailing into any pre-arranged scheme of Mann's motifs.

Thematically, of course, the book takes a preeminent place in Mann's famous series of *Künstlernovellen*, stories about artists and the life of art;—being most closely related, among these, to *Death in Venice*. Gustav von Aschenbach, too, yields to the sensuous irrational in his illicit love for the Polish boy Tadzio; his punishment is personal degradation and an untimely death. But while the artist, in this story, is shown to be threatened by the abyss of the irrational through his constant intercourse with sensuous beauty, art itself is the "human," the conquest of the irrational by the unceasing vigilance of the artist in giving it order and form. In *Dr. Faustus*, the Apollonian transfigurations of art are no longer enough by themselves; it is not by abandoning the discipline of art, but in seeking to chastise it by a more terrible discipline, that Leverkühn is lost. And Leverkühn's longed-for discipline has also appeared before in Mann's work—in the reactionary-revolutionary-Jesuit Naphta, whose debates with Set-

*This is more than a metaphorical statement. In at least one instance, the description of Daniel zur Höhe, Mann has taken passages from an early short story, "At the Prophet's," written in 1904, slightly revised them, and inserted them in *Dr. Faustus*. The passages in *Dr. Faustus* describing Leverkühn's home town, Kaisersaschern, and his impressions in Switzerland, appear *verbatim* in "Germany and the Germans." The suicide of Clarissa Rodde, as we have already noted, is taken with slight changes from Mann's autobiographical *A Sketch of My Life*. Since Mann has called the book a "montage," and passages from Nietzsche's letters and writings are incorporated in the text, the same may be true for other writings of Mann himself.

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tembrini in *The Magic Mountain* come nearest to the symbolic conflict in *Dr. Faustus.* Naphta is already an eloquent advocate of "reaction as progress," and, in his contempt for Settembrini's bourgeois humanism, equates God and the Devil as the religious principle, "opposed to life, to bourgeoisiedom, reason and virtue." Still, Hans Castorp feels it is necessary to receive at least part of his education from Naphta; a complete education, that would prepare one for love of life and the human, would have to assimilate Naphta's deification of death and the demonic irrational. This one-time equilibrium between Settembrini and Naphta, who cancelled each other out by fusing in the higher unity of Hans Castorp, has been destroyed in *Dr. Faustus.* Naphta is now the Devil himself, and he is teaching a far greater pupil than Castorp, Adrian Leverkühn, who listens to him alone. So far have we come along Naphta's path, Thomas Mann tells us, in twenty-five years. As we draw close to the mid-point of the twentieth century, the last great artist of the nineteenth, the century of bourgeois humanism, has composed an unforgettable warning which the future will disregard at its peril.

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Sea Scape with Parable

RICHARD EBERHART

A practical hand at catching fish is necessitous;
Mark the sociability, as in the fish themselves
Who dance, pronounce, waltz, or as it were rollic
In close presses of their solidarity toward Weir Cove,
A natural phenomenon. God, I suppose, sends them.
And the fishers, drawn from hamlet, farm, and dock,
Push out their various vessels and elenctic gear,
At a sign come quickly to the holy mackerel.

These are dancing on the water, with professional ease.
Are cast prophetic nets, with a glance cast at the weather.
Jubilation sits in the eyes of old and young: a catch.
It is as yare as anything in the book of sea lore,
The time right, wind and wave crucially conspiring.
The gulls, above, pervade the sky; far off the ospreys
Sit meanly on their rocks, barbarous, meditative.
It is an event social, of bulging, conclamant waters,
An exercise in a precise corner of the right sea.

It is not to speak of ghostly scavengers,
Not in the sky can be seen absolute integers
To the contemplative sense: oilskinned men
Traverse a shining field of water like toed dancers;
Time the skilled fisherman they do not see,
Nor feel their bones consecrated to the rocky walls,
Nor flesh reduced by rough force to everlasting lightness.

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The work goes on as it always has; some hours of sun
And wind, and jockeyings of the ropes, calculations
Of stress, a lively timing, expert arraignment
Of the mass, and finally the huge haul comes in.
The shining victims, lost multitudinously
Are hoisted and shoveled into the capacious holds.
    As silently as fish are vigorously together
    Swimming, directed by the laws that govern them,
    Who come this time of year to this defeating place,
    The fishermen veer off and fall away at eventide,
    Rich with big increase, leaving a vacant sea.
    Which, seen in retrospect, as if without event,
    Is full of a wide and charming serenity.

So by the inevitable analogy, are fished
Souls by the Fisher King, who with the net of time
Searches them into the silent bin of death,
Yet ever vigorous swarms of men laugh with the living.

It is true that sometimes, due to some error in man,
Some clumsy misadventure, the whole lot gets away,
And he goes back to land without his edibles,
Mocked, disenchanted, hugging his big stupidity,
Awaiting another try at the fabulous oncome.

Yet who would say, in all philosophy,
That the Master of Mankind errs and is vain?
Who would disallow the Fisher's victory,
As we drink our spirit in the haven halls of men?

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My Properties

HENRI MICHAUX

IN MY PROPERTIES EVERYTHING IS FLAT, nothing stirs; and if there is a form here or there, where does the light come from? No shadow anywhere.

Once in a while, when I have time, I observe, holding my breath; the guns are manned; and if I see something emerge, I'm off like a bullet and bound for the spot, but the head, for it's usually a head, returns into the marsh. I dig for it hastily, there is mud here, just ordinary mud or sand, sand . . .

My properties don't open to a fine sky, either. Although there seems to be nothing overhead, one has to walk bent down there as in a low tunnel.

These properties are my only properties and I have resided on them since my childhood and I can say that very few people own poorer ones.

I often wanted to lay out lovely avenues there, I would make a great park . . .

Not that I like parks, but . . . all the same.

Other times (this is a never-tiring mania with me, which turns up again after all my failures), I see in my outside life or in an illustrated book an animal which I like, a white heron for instance, and I say to myself: Now this would look well in my properties and then it might propagate itself, and I take lots of notes and I inform myself about all the things that constitute the animal's life. My documentation becomes vaster and vaster. But when I try to carry the heron into my property, it always lacks a few essential organs. I struggle. I feel in advance that it will not work out this time either; and, so far as propagation is concerned, on my properties nothing propagates, I know that only too well. I busy myself with the feeding of the new arrival, with its air, I plant trees for it, I put in grass seed, but my detestable properties are of such a

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kind that if I turn my eyes away, or somebody calls me outside for a second, when I return there is no longer anything, or only a little bed of ashes which, if hard put to it, might reveal a last tuft of burnt moss . . . if hard put to it.

And of course I keep struggling, this is no trifle.

For I am condemned to live in my properties and really must make something of them.

I am going to be thirty soon, and I have nothing yet; naturally I'm getting worried.

I succeed very well in forming one object, or one creature, or one fragment. For example, one branch or one tooth, or a thousand branches and a thousand teeth. But where to put them? There are some people who succeed effortlessly with huge structures, crowds, groups upon groups.

Not I. A thousand teeth yes, a hundred thousand teeth yes, and some days I've a hundred thousand pencils in my property, but what use are a hundred thousand pencils in a field? they're not appropriate; well then, let's set a hundred thousand draftsmen there.

Good, but while I am working to form one draftsman (and when I have one, I will have a hundred thousand of them), see how my hundred thousand pencils have disappeared.

And if I prepare a jaw for the tooth, an apparatus for digestion and excretion, as soon as I have the outside cover ready, just when I am about to put the pancreas and liver in (for I always work methodically), suddenly the teeth are gone, and soon the jaw too, and then the liver, and just when I am at the anus, there is nothing but anus, which disgusts me, for if it means coming back through the colon, the small intestine, and the biliary vesicle over again, and all the rest over again, then I give up.

But I'm not able to make entire animals with a single stroke of the wand; I proceed methodically; any other way is impossible.

Consequently my properties are always absolutely denuded of everything, with the exception of one creature, or of one series of creatures, which indeed only helps to reinforce the general

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poverty and to serve as a monstrous and unbearable advertisement for the general desolation.

Then I suppress everything and there is nothing but marshes, nothing else, marshes which are my property and which seek to make me lose hope.

And if I refuse to give in, I really don't know why.

But occasionally something comes alive, some life stirs. It's visible, it's definite. I always had a premonition that there was something in there. I'm in high spirits. But just at this moment a woman comes from outside; and riddling me with innumerable pleasures (but so close pressed that they take only an instant), and carrying me off in the same instant on a world tour twenty times over. . . . (I for my part have not dared to ask her to visit my properties in the state of poverty, of quasi-nonexistence, which they are in.) Very nice! but on the other hand, growing quickly annoyed by so many trips where I understand nothing, trips that were a mere perfume, I give her the slip, cursing women once more, and, completely lost on the planet, I weep for my properties which are nothing, but which nevertheless represent some familiar ground, and do not give me that impression of the *absurd* that I find everywhere.

I spend weeks humiliated, alone, looking for my land; people can injure me as they please at these moments.

I sustain myself with the conviction that it's not possible that I will not recover my land and, in fact, one day, a little sooner or a little later, it's back again!

What happiness to be back on one's land! It has a feeling about it that no other can have for you. There are indeed a few changes, it seems to me a little less sloped, or more damp, but the grain of the earth is the same grain.

It may be true that the harvests there were never abundant. But this grain, say what you will, talks to me. Yet if I come close, it is lost in the mass—the mass of little halos.

No matter, this is obviously *my* land. I can't explain it, but to confuse this one with another would be like confusing myself with another, quite impossible.

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There are my terrain and I; then there is the alien.

There are people who have magnificent properties and I envy them. They see something elsewhere that they like. Fine, they say, this will do for my property. No sooner said than done, the object is in their property. How is the transfer brought about? I don't know. Having practiced amassing, acquiring, from their early youth, they can't see an object without planting it immediately in their homes, and that takes place automatically.

It should not even be called avarice; reflexes, rather.

Some hardly suspect it. They have magnificent properties which they maintain by the constant exercise of their intelligence and of their extraordinary abilities, and they don't suspect it. But if you require a plant, no matter how uncommon, or an old coach like that used by Joan V of Portugal, they go away for an instant and bring you back immediately what you asked for.

Those who are clever in psychology, not the bookish, I mean, will perhaps have noticed that I have told a lie. I have said that my properties were land, but that has not always been so. On the contrary, that is very recent, although it seems to me so ancient, and even big with several lives.

I am trying to remember exactly what they were before.

They were whirlwindlike; like vast pockets, slightly luminous purses, and their substance was impalpable although very dense.

I sometimes have dates with a former girl friend. The tone of the conversation quickly becomes painful. Then I abruptly depart for my property. It is in the form of a cross. It is large and luminous. There is some daylight in this luminosity and a wild piece of steel which trembles like a lake. And there I feel comfortable; it lasts a few minutes, then out of politeness I come back to the young woman and I smile. But this smile has such power . . . (no doubt because it excommunicates her), that she goes off slamming the door.

That's how things go between my girl friend and me. It happens regularly.

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We would be better off to separate for good. If I had large and rich properties I obviously would leave her. But in the present state of things it is wiser to wait a little longer.

Coming back now to the land. I was speaking of hopelessness. But no, land on the contrary justifies every hope. On land you can build, and I will build. Now I am sure of it. I am saved. I have a base.

Formerly, since all was in space, without ceiling, or floor, if I set a creature down there, I naturally never saw it again. It would disappear. *It would disappear by falling,* that's what I had not understood, and there I was imagining that I had constructed it badly! I used to come back a few hours after putting it there, and be surprised every time by its disappearance. Now that'll never happen again. My land, to be sure, is still marshy. But I'll dry it out little by little and when it is very firm, I will establish a family of workers there.

It will be nice to walk on my land. You will see all I do there. My family is huge. You will see all kinds there, I haven't displayed them yet. But you will see it. And its evolutions will surprise the world. For it will evolve with the eagerness and passion of people who have lived a purely spatial life too long for their own taste and who awaken, transported with joy, to put on their shoes.

And then too, in space every creature was becoming too vulnerable. That made a stain, it was no use as furniture. And all the passersby kept pounding it as if it was a target.

While with land, I say . . .

Oh, it will revolutionize my life.

Mother always predicted the greatest poverty and nonentity for me. Very well. Until the land she was right; after the land we will see.

I have been the shame of my parents, but we will see, and then I am going to be happy. There will always be numerous guests. You know, I used to be very lonely, sometimes.

[*Translated by Richard Ellmann*]

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The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (II)

YVOR WINTERS

III

THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME AGREEMENT to the effect that Hopkins' commonest method of constructing a poem is to describe a landscape or a part of one and then to provide an application which is usually religious. Arthur Mizener, in an essay devoted very largely to this aspect of Hopkins, writes:

> The basic structure of Hopkins' lyrics is a description followed by a comment, an application. They are, for all their intensity, poems of reflection, in the best sense of the word rhetorical rather than dramatic. Occasionally he indulged in the kind of naked symbolism by which the lion, for instance, becomes God's strength and conducts himself accordingly, without regard for the natural habits of lions. At best this practice made for the fantastic kind of poetry we associate with Crashaw. . . .*

H. M. McLuhan, in an essay in which interpretation is often carried so far from the actual text as to approach pure fantasy, recognizes the same structure, but regards it as an essential property of a certain kind of religious mind:

> Hopkins looks at external nature as a Scripture exactly as Philo Judaeus, St. Paul and the Church Fathers had done. . . . Hopkins habitually shifts his gaze from the order and perspectives of nature to the analogous but grander scenery of the moral and intellectual order. . . . Or the book of nature provides parallel passages with the supernatural revelations of Scripture.†

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* Arthur Mizener, in *The Kenyon Critics*, p. 103.
† H. M. McLuhan, Ibid., p. 19.

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McLuhan illustrates these remarks with quotations which I omit. Mizener is perhaps a little apologetic about the method, but is not greatly disturbed by it; McLuhan seems to regard it as a major virtue. Neither appears to discern certain important difficulties inherent in it.

I will try to illustrate certain of these dangers.

> *The world is charged with the grandeur of God.*
> *It will flame out like shining from shook foil;*
> *It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil*
> *Crushed. . . .*

The first line offers a major concept, in impressive phrasing. Instead of developing the concept, as a concept, however, in the manner of a poet of the Renaissance, Hopkins proceeds to illustrate it with two descriptive figures. In the first of these we are confronted with the kind of ambiguity which occurs so often in Hopkins: if we assume that the second line is grammatically correct, then *foil* is a quantitative word and refers to tin-foil or to gold-leaf, or to something of that nature, and we have what amounts, in effect, to an image of a madman (or at least of a remarkably eccentric man) brandishing a metal bouquet; if the foil in question, however, is a fencing foil, then the grammar is defective, for the article is omitted. This particular defect is not an uncommon form of poetic license, especially in Hopkins, and Hopkins takes much greater liberties elsewhere; but the image is indeterminate. In the next image there is a curious inaccuracy of natural description: "crushed" (or spilled) oil does not "gather" to a greatness, it spreads; or if Hopkins is referring to the gathering of oil from the crushing of olives, he is not only incomplete but is again inexact in his grammar. Aside from the difficulties just mentioned, which I suppose will appear trivial to many, but which nevertheless seem to me to introduce an element of shoddiness into the style, both of these figures are almost grotesquely trivial as illustrations of the first line; as so often happens, Hopkins is unable to rise to his occasion, and he relies on

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violent assertiveness and violent rhythm to carry him over his chasms.

The eighth poem (*The Starlight Night*) devotes the octet to ecstatic description of a natural scene. In the first line of the sestet, we have the interjection:

> *Buy then! bid then! — What? — Prayer, patience, alms, vows.*

Then we have two more lines of description, and in the last three lines a statement to the effect that the universe described is the home of "Christ and his mother and all his hallows." It is a curious poem. The description is sometimes extremely brilliant and is interesting everywhere save in the sestet. Yet the real theme of the poem is to be found in the first line of the sestet, and nothing is done with it. A devotional poet of the Renaissance, dealing with "prayer, patience, alms, vows," would have had a good deal to say of each and of what each meant in terms of daily life and toward salvation. The reader who wishes to orient himself, might begin by rereading Ben Jonson's *To Heaven*, John Donne's *Thou hast made me*, Greville's *Down in the depth of mine iniquity*, and Herbert's *Church Monuments*. In no other literary period, I think, save our own, would a poet who was both a priest and a genuinely devout man have thought that he had dealt seriously with his love for Christ and his duty toward him by writing an excited description of a landscape: this kind of thing belongs to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to the period of self-expression and the abnegation of reason. The impressiveness of the landscape described in this poem provides a more nearly adequate motivation for the feeling asserted than one can find in many other poems similarly constructed: Hopkins' method in general is to employ the landscape as the immediate motive for a feeling which is too great for it, and then to append the perfunctory moral as a kind of theoretic justification. A few additional poems in which this formula occurs more or less obviously are the following: *Spring* (9), *The Sea and the Skylark* (11), *The Windhover* (12), *Pied*

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Beauty (13), *Hurrahing in Harvest* (14), and *Duns Scotus's Oxford* (20). One could add to this list, but these will serve for illustration; and I shall discuss only two of these.

Duns Scotus's Oxford offers an octet devoted to a description of the Oxford landscape, with especial reference to the mingling of city and country and the regrettable domination of the city. The sestet then provides the personal reference:

> *Yet ah! this air I gather and I release*
> *He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what*
> *He haunted who of all men most sways my spirit to peace;*
> *Of realty the rarest veinèd unraveller; a not*
> *Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;*
> *Who fired France for Mary without spot.*

This is the climax and the point of the poem, yet it is obviously very weak. We are told that Scotus is the one "who of all men most sways my spirit to peace;" yet we are not told how he does it nor why. We are told that he is "of realty the rarest veinèd unraveller; a not/Rivalled insight," yet these are empty epithets, and the subject of the poem, properly speaking, is merely mentioned sentimentally and is not defined or developed. It is as if one should say: "This is a magnificent landscape," or "this is a great man," or "this is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." What we have is a stereotyped assertion, which we are supposed to take seriously, but which we cannot take seriously for lack of definition and perceptual evidence. This is not the method of Dante, or of Crashaw, or of Donne, or of Herbert. These poets discuss the subject and omit or pass lightly over the incidentals. Hopkins all but ignores the subject and is at his best in dealing fragmentarily with the incidentals: the "towery city and branchy between towers," and the like. The incidentals are sometimes, as in this line, charming, but they are minor, and they are not incorporated into a well-organized poem, even a minor one, but are parts, rather, of a disorganized poem which pretends to be more than it is.

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The Windhover has been named repeatedly as Hopkins' best poem. Hopkins considered it to be such, and his admirers have followed him in this opinion, and some of them have carried it much farther than Hopkins did. McLuhan, for example, says:

> *The Windhover* could never have become the richly complex poem it is if Hopkins had not tested and explored all its themes beforehand, in other poems. There is no other poem of comparable length in English, or perhaps in any language, which surpasses its richness and intensity or realized artistic organization. There are two or three sonnets of Shakespeare . . . which might be put with Donne's "At the round earth's" for comparison and contrast with this sonnet. But they are not comparable with the range of experience and multiplicity of integrated perception which is found in *The Windhover*.*

The Windhover begins with the much-discussed description of the bird in flight; if one can keep himself disentangled from perverse theories of scansion while reading it, it is a fine description, but in itself it is merely description, that is, an example of the simplest subject matter available to the poet. As description it can be equalled and even surpassed by a great many passages in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Hardy, and perhaps others. Hardy's nighthawk, for example, is rendered more clearly and concisely as regards the bird itself; it is free from the pathetic fallacy which occurs in Hopkins' reading of his own ecstacy into an action which for the bird was merely a routine matter of business; and it is not required at any point in the poem to carry a symbolic burden too great for it. I offer Hardy's nighthawk, from the poem entitled *Afterwards*:

> *If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,*
> *The dewfall hawk comes crossing the shades to alight*
> *Upon the wind-warped upland thorn. . . .*

The epithet *dewfall* contributes to the sense of the time of day and suggests the soundless and mysterious appearance of the bird: it does this quite as effectively as Hopkins' *dapple-dawn-drawn*

* McLuhan, Ibid., p. 27.

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achieves its particular ends, more economically, and perhaps with greater originality. The simile in the first line contributes to both of the same effects. Every detail in the description reinforces every other. There is no vaguely excited and actually inefficient description such as Hopkins' *morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's dauphin.*

The unexplained ecstasy which hangs over the octet is supposedly explained in the sestet:

> *Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here*
> *Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion*
> *Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!*
>
> *No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion*
> *Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,*
> *Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.*

Before we can discover the degree and kind of success which appear in these lines, however, we must discover the meaning of the words. The first difficulty inheres in the word *buckle;* the second in the identity of the chevalier; and the third in the meaning of the phrase *makes plough down sillion/ Shine.*

John Pick, in *Gerard Manley Hopkins, Priest and Poet,** has this to say, after discussing the beauty described in the octet:

> But there is a beauty far, far greater. And the sestet is devoted to a revelation of a beauty beyond this beauty, a beauty which is "a billion times told lovelier, more dangerous" than the purely natural and triumphant flight. And whence comes this achievement which is more than achievement, this mastery which is more than mastery?
>
> It is in the act of "buckling," when the windhover swoops down, when its flight is crumpled, when "brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume" in an act of self-immolation send off a fire far greater than any natural beauty. . . . Nor is this to be wondered at, for this is true even in humble little things—is true of everything: the sheen of common earth shines out when the plough breaks it into furrows; and fire breaks from fire only in the moment of its own

* Oxford University Press, 1942, p. 71.

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> destruction. . . . Here is Christ upon the Cross and Hopkins the *alter Christus*. Beautiful was Christ's public life, but "a billion times told lovelier" was His self-immolation on the Cross, His sacrifice transmuted by the Fire of Love into something far greater than any mere natural beauty. More beautiful than any natural achievement was Hopkins' own humble and plodding continuance of the ethic of redemption through his own mystical self-destruction, his own humble following of Christ to the very Cross of Calvary. And the beauty of Christ and the beauty of the Jesuit to eyes that see more than this world is the beauty of their dying to live.

Pick selects one of several possible meanings for *buckle*: for him the word means to collapse, as if we should say, "The wings of the plane buckled and it crashed." He finds support for his general interpretation in the writings of Loyola, which Hopkins as a Jesuit had studied carefully, and from scattered passages in Hopkins' other writings. But we have no right to suppose that any poem by Hopkins is a gloss on Loyola or on anything else unless there is clear evidence in the text, and there is no such evidence here. The falcon's wings do not buckle, in this sense, when he dives: they are retracted close to the body and are under perfect control; the dive of the falcon is one of the most remarkable physical facts observable in brute nature. Furthermore, the dive is not an act of self-sacrifice, it is an attack on the bird's prey. If Pick's interpretation is right, then the poem is badly conceived from start to finish; but it would be unfair to Hopkins to read into his poem a meaning for which the poem offers no evidence and which, once it is there, ruins the poem. Pick apparently takes the expression *O my chevalier!* as being addressed to Christ, but there is no real evidence of this either. Christ is not mentioned in the poem. The poem is dedicated *To Christ our Lord*, but this does not mean that the poem is addressed to Christ. When a man dedicates a novel to a friend, he does not imply that the novel is addressed to his friend or is about him—he is merely offering a gift: since Hopkins regarded this as his best poem, he may merely have offered it to Christ in homage. On the other hand, it is possible that Hopkins meant to imply address in the dedication; there is no way of being sure, but one can at least

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collate the miscellaneous evidence, which is not greatly in favor of such an interpretation. The difficulty in the second tercet is a minor one, in the sense that it does not affect the interpretation of the poem, but it is troublesome with respect to the particular image. The question is this: does Hopkins mean to say that the sheer plodding of the plowman makes the plow shine as it goes down the furrow, or does he mean to say that the plowed-down earth is made to shine? If the first meaning is correct, then *plough* is a noun and should have an article; if the second meaning is correct, then *plough* is a past participle incorrectly spelled for the sake of euphony. The first of these licenses, though awkward, is common, not only in Hopkins but in other poets; the second would be violent and unlikely in any other poet, but is plausible enough in Hopkins. Pick believes that the earth shines and not the plow, and I agree with him because of the natural detail which is described: the plow does not gain polish in plowing, it loses polish, for a certain amount of earth adheres to it; but the freshly turned earth has a shining surface until the dampness dries or the surface for other reasons begins to crumble. However, the passage has been taken in both ways by various critics.

McLuhan is at least as adventurous as Pick in his departures from the text. He writes:

> To a member of a militant order whose founder was a Spanish soldier or chevalier, the feudal character of the opening imagery is quite natural. "Minion," "dauphin," "valour," "plume," and "buckle" alike evoke the world of dedicated knighthood and shining panoply of armor. Thus the mounted chevalier flashing off exploit as he "rung upon the rein" enables Hopkins later to reverse the situation with great dramatic effect in "sheer plod makes plough down sillion Shine." The paradox consists in the fact that Hopkins as lowly plowman following a horse flashes off infinitely more exploit than Hopkins the imagined chevalier.
>
> More central still to the dramatic movement is the way in which the chevalier images of the octet are concentrated in "here Buckle!" Buckling is the traditional gesture of the knight preparing his armor for action. A buckler is the bright shield of defense bearing insignia, flashing defiance. . . . I have already said that "here" means in the "obedient and humble heart" and that "Buckle" means that the "brute

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> beauty" of the bird as the mirror of God's grandeur is to be transferred or flashed to the "heart in hiding," just as the burnished surface of the plow in action is hidden in the earth. The high-spirited but obedient heart of man is "a billion times" better a mirror of Christ the chevalier than is the mirror of the external world. . . .*

McLuhan supports his interpretation at some length by quoting passages from other poems which suggest the theme which he has here in mind; my objection to his interpretation is simply that he departs too appallingly far from the actual text of the poem in hand. It is worth noting in passing that he agrees with Pick in the meaning of *chevalier,* and that, although he seems here to accept the other meaning of the plow image, he yet accepts both meanings of this latter in the course of his essay.

Miss Ruggles, although she believes that the plow shines rather than the earth, offers a more direct and simple explanation of the other phrases, and she gives us an interpretation which we can find justified, more or less, in the text. She says:

> His imagination is caught and lifted as the small spiralling creature, magnificent in his instinctive performance, hovers at the very crux of its mastery, poised almost stationary against the opposing tide of wind.
>
> *Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here*
> *Buckle!*
>
> This is the ultimate assertion, the carrying out of selfhood—
>
> *AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion*
> *Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!*
>
> It is in the act of buckling, when every sinew and chord of the identity thrills, at grips with its appointed function, that the beauty of the self flares brightest.
>
> *No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion*
> *Shine, and blue-streak embers, ah my dear,*
> *Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.*
>
> The crude plough gleams in the moment of its contact with the resistful soil. Embers, foredoomed to crumble, can glow in this obscure enactment as fiercely as the flame.†

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* Op. cit. pp. 22-3.

†*Gerard Manley Hopkins*, by Eleanor Ruggles, W. W. Norton Co., Inc., 1944, p. 156.

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Miss Ruggles interprets the poem in terms of the concept of haecceity, inscape, or selfhood, which so obsesses Hopkins, and so keeps the poem closer to the bird which it apparently describes. For her, *buckle* means to concentrate all one's powers, as when we say: "He buckled to his work." And for her, the chevalier is the bird itself. She is able, also, to support her interpretation through other passages in Hopkins. In terms of her interpretation, we have a conclusion in the second tercet which merely points out that two much less impressive actions give off their own fire: the first, the plodding effort of the plowman, which is humble but active; the second, the passive action of the coals when they fall and light up; so that it is no wonder that the striking action of the bird should give off a superior fire.

With this interpretation in mind, we may return to McLuhan for a moment. McLuhan assumes that Hopkins is developing a single chivalric image until he gets to the last tercet and abandons it, but the skate image interrupts this, and even McLuhan makes no effort to translate it into chivalric terms; it is the usual procedure of Hopkins, moreover, to hurl miscellaneous images at his subject from all sides, rather than to develop one of them fully. There is no reason to accept McLuhan's interpretation of *buckle*, therefore, unless it draws the whole poem together, which it fails to do. McLuhan believes that the plowman is figuratively Hopkins, but the poem does not say so; McLuhan says that the figurative plowman "flashes off infinitely more exploit than Hopkins the imagined chevalier," but the poem says that it is no wonder that the bird at the height of his achievement should flash light when a mere plowman can do it in a small way. McLuhan says that "here" means "in the obedient and humble heart," but Hopkins says nothing about obedience and humility, and of his heart he says "my heart in hiding," which on the face of it seems to mean "my heart within me," or "my heart unobserved."

Miss Ruggles takes another step in her interpretation, which brings her closer to Pick and to McLuhan, though still leaves her far behind them. She says:

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> The beauty and valor of the winging falcon are Christ's own beauty and valor in an unthinking and finite form. Thus in a sense, the windhover is Christ. Christ is the windhover.

The poem does not say this, and the dedication does not necessarily imply it, but this interpretation would be in line with Hopkins' thought and with his practice in other poems; it would offer, moreover, some explanation of the violent rhapsody of the first tercet. This brings us to the crucial weakness of the poem, however; for if Miss Ruggles is right at this point, as I suspect she is, then the poem falls short of its theme in just about the same fashion as does the poem on Duns Scotus. To describe a bird, however beautifully, and to imply that Christ is like him but greater, is to do very little toward indicating the greatness of Christ.

Let me illustrate this objection with an account of my own experience. For more than thirty years I have bred and exhibited Airedales in a small way, and I have owned some very fine ones. At the present time I own a young dog who seems to me exceptionally beautiful, especially when he is in motion. No less than Hopkins' falcon, he is one of God's little creatures; he is probably a much better specimen of his kind and better adapted to his peculiar ends, and if one is sufficiently scholarly and sufficiently perceptive, one will be aware of this probability; in addition, I am fairly certain that his moral character is more admirable than that of the bird. Yet it would never occur to me to write a poem describing his beauty and then stating that the beauty of Christ was similar but merely greater. To do so would seem to me ludicrous and perhaps blasphemous as well. Yet there is no essential difference between my dog and Hopkins' bird; the bird has the advantage merely of the Romantic and sentimental feeling attached to birds as symbols of the free and unrestrained spirit, a feeling derived very largely from Shelley's *Skylark* and from a handful of similar—and similarly bad—poems of the past century and a half. Hopkins' poem employs a mechanical and a very easy formula. His image resembles the image of the anvil

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in *No worst, there is none,* in which we get the physical embodiment of the meaning, without the meaning, or with too small a part of it. To defend this sort of thing with pretentious remarks about the "sacramental view of nature" is merely foolish, no matter how numerous, pious, and ancient the precedents which one may be in a position to cite.

Even if we leave Christ out of it and confine the poem to the bird, we find much the same difficulty in the first tercet: the light that flashes from the bird when he buckles is "a billion times told lovelier, more dangerous" than it was before; but the degree and kind of danger are the important thing, and one is not given them. We are left where we were left with the "rarest-veinèd unraveller, a not rivalled insight," in *Duns Scotus's Oxford.*

I would like to add one minor suggestion in post-script. I am no great philologist, myself, but in my casual reading of the more obvious dictionaries I have observed that the word *buckle,* in Scots and in northern English, sometimes means *to marry.* In this sense, the word would function as well as it would in any other sense. I am not aware that Hopkins ever made a notation of this meaning of the word, though he may have done so; but we know that Hopkins was inordinately fascinated with folk locutions and examined them endlessly, and this interest strikes me as being quite as relevant to the poem as his training in Loyola or his interest in Duns Scotus's theory of haecceity. What the word actually means in the poem, I confess I do not know. The reader may proceed from this point as he sees fit.

What should the verdict be on such a poem? As I have shown, the metrical intentions of the poet are more than uncertain and are probably unsound; but one can make out fairly well with the rhythm if one simply reads the poem as it seems to be written. The crucial statement of the poem, regardless of the interpretation which one accepts, appears to occur in the second and third lines of the first tercet, yet this statement is merely an *assertion* of importance and of excitement, it is not an explanation and description. The sestet contains three expressions which have led to various interpretations and of which no interpretation is

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certain. As to *buckle,* Pick's interpretation (like my own as well), has grammar on its side; for if McLuhan is right, the expression should be *buckle on,* and if Miss Ruggles is right, it is *buckle to,* and each of these calls for an object. But grammar is worth very little as a criterion in dealing with Hopkins; he violates grammar as he sees fit, and the interpreter can seldom call it to witness. He violates grammar as he sees fit, mainly to gain results which he considers more valuable than grammar: striking epithets and striking phonic effects. But the phonic effects are frequently over-wrought and badly wrought, and the epithets, when they do not overwhelm the subject with an assortment of ill-adjusted details, are likely to be incomprehensible because of the way in which they have been attained. The first tercet fails to define its subject; the second tercet is more nearly comprehensible, but in itself is not very effective, especially with regard to the embers: the function of the embers in the total theme seems clear enough, at least in Miss Ruggles' terms, but the embers as embers, as "inscape," are described in language which is coarse and imperceptive. The language is violent, and it continues both the tone of strong emotion and the rhythm which seems to have been established, but it offers a poor perception of embers as such. The description of the bird in the octet is impressive in the main, though I believe that it has been overrated. The bird is apparently used to symbolize the perfection of Christ, but the haecceity of the bird and the haecceity of Christ are very different matters indeed, and of the haecceity of Christ we are told precisely nothing in the poem. Unless Christ is symbolized, however, or unless something far greater than the bird is symbolized, then the ecstatic tone of the poem is not justified; and in fact it is not justified if Christ is symbolized, for it could be justified only by an indication of those qualities of Christ which would serve the purpose. The poem is romantic both in its over-wrought emotionalism and in its carelessness. It is not the greatest sonnet ever written, nor even the best poem in Hopkins; it is a poem of real, but minor and imperfect virtues, and that is all.

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IV

What conceivably, are the reasons for the kind of poetry which we have observed in Hopkins?

As to the biographical reasons, we can merely surmise, and although I confess to some distaste for biographical surmises, which are invariably both inascertainable and in the nature of arguments *ad hominem,* nevertheless certain guesses are hard to lay aside. Whatever the reasons may have been, Hopkins in his later years passed through a period of psychological crisis in which his mental balance, if he really preserved it at all times, was precarious. The reasons for this crisis are hard to guess, and perhaps are not important, but the crisis appears to have been real. There was, however, a trace of effeminacy in Hopkins, which one can see in his portraits, in his letters, and in his poems, which may well have been at least in part the cause of the matter. The conflict between such a weakness or some other weakness and his faith and vocation may at times have been acute, though I suspect that his faith and vocation were his chief source of strength, and not, as some writers have supposed, a source of weakness. Whatever the nature of his difficulty, his struggle with it, so far as we may judge, was desperate, and, in spite of its lack of intellectual clarity, little short of heroic. The difficulty seems to have been real, and Hopkins at the same time did not deal with it intelligibly in his poems, though his poems appear to have been affected by it. There is in a large portion of his verse an element of emotional violence which is neither understood nor controlled.

Historically, Hopkins belongs to the late Romantic period. The text-book dates for the Romantic period (1798 to 1832) are merely an academic convention, designed primarily for the organization of university courses. The Romantic period began, one may reasonably say, in 1711, with the publication of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics;* it reached a succinct identity in the early 1730's, with the publication of Pope's *Essay on Man,* more particularly with the third and fourth Epistles. In spite of contending forces,

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the Romantic movement has gained steadily in strength to the present time. The movement represents, essentially, a rebellion against the authority of reason in favor of the authority of impulse and emotion. In Pope this was a matter of theory, not of practice: Pope's practice was inherited from an earlier period and from better ideas. By the middle of the eighteenth century, with Gray, Collins, Smart, and others, it was a matter of both theory and practice, and practice has been more and more influenced into our time. In Hopkins' own time, as Arthur Mizener has indicated, Romantic ideas and practice tended to fuse with erudition and with erudite eccentricity, and we meet such figures as Doughty, Carlyle, and Browning, just as we meet in the twentieth century such studious eccentrics as Pound, Eliot, and Marianne Moore. It is not curious, then, that Hopkins should be inclined by his personal nature and by his historical setting about equally to practice an extremely emotional and eccentric form of poetry.

But Hopkins was a Catholic priest, and Catholic doctrine exalts reason, teaches distrust of impulse, and insists on a measure of conformity to familiar norms. That his faith and his vocation disciplined Hopkins' personal life I believe to be undeniable, in spite of such eccentricities as he showed: had it not been for the faith and the vocation, the eccentricities might well have been disastrous. But the question arises as to what interpretation of Catholic doctrine he found which justified him in writing poetry of the kind in which he commonly indulged himself. The answer to the question is not far to seek.

Among the *Fragments, Etc.* published at the end of the *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* is a poem entitled *On a Piece of Music* (No. 67). Of this poem John Pick writes as follows:

> But as we approach the study of the poems which Hopkins wrote, we come to the judgment of the work of art and we must be careful not to praise it for the wrong things. Its religious significance does not in itself give it poetic greatness; it may express a sacramental view of nature, and yet it may be an inferior poem. Whether it is art or not depends on artistic standards. "The standard and aim is

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strict beauty," Hopkins wrote to Bridges, "and if the writer misses that his verse, whatever its incidental merits, is not strict or proper poetry." Hopkins expressed this in another way in saying that a work of art is "good" or less good, but as such is not right or wrong:

Therefore this masterhood,
This piece of perfect song,
This fault-not-found-with good
Is neither right nor wrong. . . .

No more than Re and Mi,
Or sweet the golden glue
That's built for by the bee.

The poem from which these lines are taken, "On a Piece of Music" (an undated fragment), makes the important distinction which was maintained by the scholastic tradition—the distinction between art and prudence. Maritain has carefully shown the importance of differentiating between the two, and here we can but follow his analysis. While art operates "ad bonum operis," for the good of the work done, prudence operates "ad bonum operantis," for the good of the worker. Art as such has no other end than the perfection of the work made, and not the perfection of the man making. That is the view that Hopkins also supported.

But in the same poem the Jesuit wrote:

What makes the man and what
The man within that makes:
Ask whom he serves or not
Serves and what side he takes.

For good grows wild and wide,
Has shades, is nowhere none;
But right must seek a side,
And choose for chieftain one.

In these lines he is concerned not with the work of art as such, but with the artist; not with the end of art, but with the end of man; not with art but with prudence.

While art concerns a local end, says St. Thomas, prudence concerns the whole of human life and its last end. Thus while "the sole end of art is the work itself and its beauty . . . for the man making, the work to be done comes into the line of morality and so is merely a means." The end of the work of art is beauty but the end of man is God. "If the artist," according to this view, "were to take for the

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> final end of his activity, that is to say for beatitude, the end of his art or the beauty of his work, he would be, purely and simply, an idolator."
>
> All poets may be—and ultimately must be—judged from both points of view. The great devotional poet must be at the same time a great poet and a deeply religious man.

It will readily be observed that this view of art differs radically from the view which I myself am defending. According to my own view, the poem is a rational statement about a human experience, made in such a way that the emotion which ought to be motivated by that rational understanding of the experience is communicated simultaneously with the rational understanding: the poem is thus a complete judgment of the experience, a judgment both rational and emotional. The poetic medium is simply a means to a finer and more comprehensive act of understanding than we can accomplish without it. The poem thus falls under the heading of prudence, to continue with the scholastic terms; it is a method for perfecting the understanding and moral discrimination; it is not an obscurely isolated end in itself. I believe that my own view of art is more Thomistic than the one which Pick offers, that it is more in conformity with Thomistic philosophy as a whole; for it relates a major human activity to the whole of human life, to the economy of redemption, so to speak, and does not leave it dangling. On the other hand, Thomas is largely to blame, I suspect, for this construction of what he wrote of art. He apparently did not take the arts seriously enough to treat them systematically. At any rate, he did not treat them in the systematic fashion in which he treated almost everything else, but merely used such ideas of art as he possessed to illustrate other matters, so that the person seeking his views on the subject must search for many brief and scattered comments and relate them as best he can. There are passages among these comments which make the interpretation offered by Pick appear doubtful, but there are others which support it; and nowhere that I can discover is there a clear statement of the relationship of the form to the subject, a statement that will bring the form demonstrably within

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the moral order and the order of understanding. Thomas is guilty of one confusion, for example, which is common among esthetic-ians: he appears to find a common quality in what we call the beauty of nature and in what we call the beauty of art. A beautiful natural object, however, is not in itself an act of human judgment; it is outside of the moral order. And although a man's apprehension of such an object, and evaluation of it, is an act of judgment and within the moral order, this apprehension and evaluation can occur only in an act of criticism or in a descriptive work of art. If the artist, however, is conceived as one who creates objects comparable to natural objects, he is working outside of the moral order, and this notion will result in one form or another of a doctrine of art for art's sake, of art "ad bonum operis." From my own point of view, the natural object cannot be viewed as a work of art, for it is not a work of human judgment; but as a part of human experience, and like any other part of human experience, it is a legitimate subject for art.

It is not my purpose, at present, however, either to attack Thomas or to defend him. Regardless of whether Thomas may be held responsible for the opinions which Pick summarizes, a good many students of Thomas have derived them, and what concerns me at the moment is the fact that Hopkins is among these.

As Pick indicates, however, there is a moral rider. The poet *as a man* has moral responsibilities; he should if possible encourage virtue, and above all he should not encourage vice. But in regard to this function, he will operate, presumably, in the way of choosing his subject—there is no idea that morality of any kind is involved in the treatment of the subject. What we have is a kind of ecclesiastical version of the Horatian compromise, with much leeway on the one hand for a barbarous moral criticism, and great freedom on the other for stylistic irresponsibility on the part of the poet. In *The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins* there is an early composition entitled *On the Origin of Beauty: A Platonic Dialogue,* which begins by deriving the principles of beauty from natural objects, and which concludes by discussing poetic beauty wholly in terms of construction, and which

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establishes no relationship between form and substance, which establishes, in other words, form as a thing and an end in itself. On the other hand, we may find the ethical criterion in a letter to Baillie in 1868:

> I cannot find yr. letter unfortunately or wd. look again about *The Lady with the Camellias*. I remember however that you assume I shall contradict whatever you say. I dare say it is a graceful and pathetic story—why shd. it not be? With regard to the morality it is true no doubt [absolutely] that any subject may be chosen for its art value alone and so will not, or rather need not, be any scandal to the writer or reader. The question, however, is the practical effect, and is of course one of degree, where no line can be drawn. I mean for instance that it is impossible not personally to form an opinion against the morality of a writer like Swinburne, where the proportion of these subjects to the whole is great and secondly where the things themselves are the extreme cases in their own kind. Another thing is, that what is innocent in a writer, if it must cause certain scandal to readers becomes wrong on that ground. This too is a question of degree for perhaps we are not bound to consider those who will take scandal from everything: it is required that the number only shd. be small. Then with the work itself the question is how far in point of detail one may safely go—another question of degree: one thinks e.g. Othello shd. be called innocent, Ovid immoral. . . . *

One observes here that a work may have an *art value alone,* but that it should also deal with an innocent subject, that is, should not be "immoral." But the concept of art is completely divorced from the concept of morality so far as any functional relationship goes. Swinburne is immoral because of the nature of his subjects, not because he falsifies them in the interests of excessive and sentimental decoration. In these terms, Baudelaire would be quite as immoral as Swinburne, because of his subjects, and Hopkins himself would be invariably a moral poet because of his subjects. Yet in my own terms, Baudelaire is at least very often a profoundly moral poet because of his understanding of his subjects, and Hopkins is very often an immoral poet for much the same reasons why Swinburne seems to me immoral. To say that *Othello* is

*Further Letters, pp. 81-2.

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"innocent" strikes me as curious. *Othello* is rather a triumph of the active understanding. To demonstrate the structural proportions of *Othello* on the one hand, and to prove it morally innocuous on the other, will not get us very far on the way to an understanding of its greatness; and yet Hopkins' ideas about literary art will provide him with the tools to do no more than this.

These ideas will justify (within the limits mentioned) a perfectly romantic art: emotional intensity for its own sake, metrical elaboration for its own sake, metaphor for its own sake, repetition and elaboration of structure for their own sakes. The poem becomes at once an unrestrained indulgence in meaningless emotion, and an unrestrained exercise in meaningless ingenuity; the poet has no responsibility to understand and evaluate his subject truly. If one will consider such poems as *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, *The Loss of the Eurydice*, *Binsey Poplars*, *Spelt from the Sybil's Leaves*, and *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo*, to mention only some of the more obvious examples, one will find the perfect product of the theory. The paraphrasable content of all of these poems is so slight as to be reducible to a sentence or two for each. The structures erected upon these simple bases are so fantastically elaborate that the subjects are all but lost and the poems frequently verge upon the ludicrous. Hopkins' concept of "inscape" or of essential identity seems to have functioned in two ways in his poems: first with regard to the poem conceived as an arbitrary creation, an all but abstract form, and secondly with regard to the sensory perceptions from which he drew his incidental imagery. With the inscape, the true meaning and value, of his substantial theme, he appears very seldom to have troubled himself.*

*I am aware that one may find a few passages in Hopkins' prose which seem to refute these claims. Selma Jeanne Cohen, for example, in the *Philological Quarterly* for January, 1947, argues the opposite view. She cites a few passages from Hopkins in which he argues the need for "earnestness" and the perception of "truth." But neither in Hopkins nor in Miss Cohen is there any apparent realization of the need for implementing these generalizations, of establishing in detailed terms the way in which poetic form itself is related to the subject, is a means to the perception of truth in the subject. It is as if a politician should recommend good government, without offering a detailed program. It appears to be an empty generalization, offered sincerely, no doubt, but casually, and with no attempt to pursue its implications

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V

What, then, can we salvage from Hopkins? Among the poems with which I have not already dealt in at least some small measure, one should consider the following, I believe, if only tentatively: Numbers 3, 16, 25, 33, 37, 40, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 65, 67, 73, and 74.

Number 3 (*The Habit of Perfection*) is an early poem which has been treated by Hopkins' admirers in a more or less patronizing fashion. The poem contains one phrase to which I should make slight objection: *the hutch of tasty lust.* The word *hutch* is irrelevant to the perception, and the word *lust* forces the perception, and the combination of sounds is difficult. Nevertheless the poem is free from the later excesses, is remarkably well executed, and deals with a serious topic; I should name it as one of the best.

Number 16 (*The Valley of the Elwy*) reverses in a sense Hopkins' commonest formula, that of description and religious application. It begins with the general description of a scene, partly human and partly natural, which Hopkins loved; then, instead of proceeding from natural beauty to the beauty of God, the poem states that the humans are unworthy of the general loveliness of the scene, and the poem ends with a prayer that God grant them his grace. The poem is simple and honest; there is no unarticulated violence—in fact, there is nothing unarticulated and there is no violence; it is not a great poem, but it is both successful and moving. The meter contains some of Hopkins' innovations, but in a quiet form.

Number 25 (*Andromeda*) is an unfortunate compromise be-

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in a serious manner. Many of the passages cited by Miss Cohen seem to me to support my views rather than hers. She does not deal with the final stanzas of *On a Piece of Music* which quite obviously state the theory which Pick derives from them. And she does not study the poems: she starts with the assumption that the poems are both sound and great, and merely looks about elsewhere for theoretic justification of this postulate. In doing this, she follows the line of most academic (and perhaps other) criticism of Hopkins and other poets as well. Too much criticism proceeds in this fashion, whether it be criticism of Hopkins, of Poe, of Emerson, or of someone else. It is not criticism; it is apologetics; and it often leads to untenable theories.

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tween the methods of Hopkins and of Milton. The poem is reasoned from beginning to end: the parts are rationally related; one leads to another; there is nothing extraneous. The fable is a good one: Andromeda is the human soul and Perseus is Christ. The theme embodied by the fable, the salvation of the soul by Divine Grace, is a serious one. The phrases individually are admirable, and they are admirable in all their interrelations save in those which are metrical. The poem is basically iambic pentameter; it employs a certain number of dissyllabic sprung feet of the type used by Googe and Nashe, and these work fairly well in themselves, although there seems to be no overwhelming occasion for them. The main trouble is this: that Hopkins employs extremely violent enjambement in three places—lines two and three, lines seven and eight, lines twelve and thirteen—without the rhetorical and rhythmic structure to support it. The poem lacks his usual violence of rhythm, which results, when well managed, in a steady rhythmic flow from beginning to end, a flow which minimizes line-endings; and it lacks the absolutely smooth rhythm and the long and intricate sentence of Milton, which likewise reduce the importance of line-endings. The poem employs elements from both methods which do not combine well, and the rhythmical (and hence the rhetorical) result is rough and jerky. The poem just falls short of being a major achievement.

Number 33 (*Inversnaid*) is a descriptive poem which pretends to be nothing else; it is beautifully executed; the meter is accentual, but the accents are real and not artificial, in spite of the fact that Hopkins feels called upon to mark a few of them. It is a minor poem, but a very fine one.

Number 37 (*The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe*) is a poem in which syllabic meter is managed with great success, and much of it is fine in other respects. I should make two fairly serious objections to it: lines 73 to 113 could very profitably be cut out, for they state nothing of the theme which is not stated elsewhere, and, although they are not bad, they are not as good as the rest of the poem and merely give the impression which we so often have of Hopkins that the poet simply did not know when

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to stop talking; and the expression *wild air* which recurs several times strikes me as very curiously in discord with the subject of Mary and her function:

> *Stir in my ears, speak there,*
> *Of God's love, O live air,*
> *Of patience, penance, prayer:*
> *World-mothering air, air wild,*
> *Wound with thee, in thee isled,*
> *Fold home, fast hold thy child.*

The expression *live air* is a fine stroke, but the concept of wildness is incomprehensible in such a context. One has the feeling that Hopkins somehow felt that one must be wild to be alive.

Number 40 (*Carrion Comfort*) is one of the so-called "terrible sonnets" which were written during the period of greatest stress in Hopkins' career; it immediately precedes the sonnet beginning "No worst, there is none," which I have already discussed in the first section of this essay. Number 40 is more explicit in one respect than is 41, for it states plainly that the anguish in question is imposed upon him by God in order to purify him, that it takes the form of his wish to flee from God and his inability to do so. The import of the struggle with God, however, is still remarkably uncertain. Is it, for example the poet's lower nature which is in rebellion? Is he tortured with theological doubts? Or is he merely unable to face the appalling vision of God which his theological convictions would naturally give him? The poem could be made a far more powerful thing if couched in more precise intellectual terms, if the motive were rendered in the strong and orderly development which we find in Jonson and Herbert. As it stands, it contains, like 41, a large element of loose emotion and is unsatisfactory unless one merely enjoys emotional indulgence for its own sake. The meter is looser than that of 41, and (no doubt in order to communicate emotional violence) meter and sentence-form alike become short, hard, over-emphatic, and monotonous in the sestet; and in the sestet also he twice falls into his trick of the

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mechanical repetition of sound and form which mars so much of his work and is quite as definitely a mannerism in Hopkins as in Swinburne. In *Spelt from the Sybil's Leaves*, for example, we get such phrases as *Disremembering, dismembering,* and *skeined, stained, veined;* and here we get *that toil, that coil,* and at the end the melodramatic (*my God!*) *my God*, which, though it has been greatly admired, leaves me, I confess, quite cold.

In Number 44 (*To seem the stranger lies my lot*) the theme is clearly stated, or perhaps one should say the themes: in the first quatrain the poet refers to the separation from his family resulting from his religion; in the second quatrain he refers to the separation from England resulting from the same cause, but adds that the cause is worth the cost. In the sestet he adds that he is still further removed from all that he loves personally as a result of his being in Ireland, but says he can still both give and get love; and he then complains bitterly of his frustration as an artist. The last matter is not clearly related to the others, though all represent aspects of his personal unhappiness and are thus in some measure related. The chief flaw in the poem occurs in the last line and is a matter of diction; moreover, it is so grotesque as to be ruinous:

> *This to hoard unheard,*
> *Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.*

One can perhaps pass over the minor clumsiness to be found in the second quatrain of this poem, but a passage like this one is hard to endure. The mere fact that the author has genius is insufficient justification: there are many authors with genius, and many of these have greater skill and more artistic conscience than Hopkins ordinarily exhibits.

Number 45 (*I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day*) states in the first quatrain the theme of spiritual agony which we have seen in other poems. In the second quatrain, by way of a comparison, it is suggested that this agony may be in part the result of separation from a friend and hence of personal loneliness. The sestet states that the condition is the result of the poet's realization

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of the limitations of his own identity, yet the nature of the limitations is not given, and the explicit theme hardly seems an adequate account of feelings so violent. The poem is one of the best of this group; it is relatively unmarred by stylistic eccentricities. Its chief fault in the matter of style is a certain hard, emphatic, and monotonous rhythm, a rhythm common in Hopkins, and somewhat mechanical and imperceptive.

Number 46 (*Patience, hard thing*) is one of the best sonnets also, and I think better than the last. The poem is a generalized statement rather than a personal one, and the poet is freed for the moment from his somewhat obscure emotions; the poem is genuinely moving, yet it has not the concentration and precision which one finds in the greatest poetry, but is somehow a little blurred. The third and fourth lines, for example, get their effect, such as it is, by the familiar devices of quick repetition and alliteration, not by the force of any particular phrase or series of phrases, and the two sensory images, of the ivy and of the honeycomb, although the former at any rate is charming, are scarcely necessary or up to their subject. Both of these images dull the meaning instead of sharpening it, distract the attention instead of focussing it, and the second in particular seems forced: the adjective *crisp*, for example, although it describes a real honeycomb is irrelevant to the idea and interrupts the poem.

Number 47 (*My own heart let me more have pity on*) is another poem of unclarified emotion, and is one of the weakest: it is little more than a collection of mannerisms, a game of alliteration and other phonetic repetitions, and the diction and grammar of the last two lines are grotesque and clumsy.

Number 49 (*In Honor of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez*) I think the best of Hopkins' sonnets and one of his five best poems. It is marred by the expression *gashed flesh or galled shield* in the second line: the difficulty is not merely one of alliteration, but of difficult consonant combinations and excessive length of syllables, so that the phrase is hard to pronounce and receives a forced emphasis; and since the phrase is not very sharply perceptive, one feels, as one does so often in reading Hopkins, that emphasis has been

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made a substitute for precision. The phrase is a kind of habitual hold-over from his poems in the more violent meter and rhetoric and is out of place here, for the poem is quietly written. Hopkins is able here, as in a few other poems, to free himself from his obscure personal emotions, for he is writing of another man and of one very different from himself. The poem is not developed by means of a description and application, nor by means of the repetition of ornament. It is reasoned from beginning to end, and nothing is superfluous; and the simile in the first half of the sestet is not only precisely applicable to the theme but is beautifully managed in itself.

Numbers 50 *(Thou art indeed just, Lord)* and 51 *(To R.B.)* are on a single topic, the poet's artistic sterility, and they are about equally disappointing. In the former, when the poet arrives at the statement about the "sots and thralls of lust," a statement which conceivably might have been developed further with strong effect, he merely drops the matter and goes into a trivial passage about the banks and braes; the birds and blossoms which he describes here are outside of the moral order and are irrelevant to the problem which he has posed. The poem ends with a sexual image and a vegetation image in somewhat curious conjunction; neither is particularly good in itself and neither is particularly appropriate to the theme; both are trite. The sonnet *To R.B.* is better, but Hopkins shows his characteristically poor judgment in the use of sexual imagery. The mind of the poet (who is a man) becomes a mother; the nature of the sexual act, or rather the psychological state accompanying it, is profoundly unlike the state which he is describing; the nine years of pregnancy are grotesque. The second line contains enough descriptive realism so that it can ill afford its large element of unreality; and I doubt that Hopkins knew the nature and function of a blowpipe, or, if he did, that he considered them. The last line of the sonnet is moving, especially in its cadence.

Of the remaining pieces which I have listed for consideration, Number 65 *(Moonrise)* is merely a descriptive fragment, lovely in its fashion, but obviously unfinished; the other three, though

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published among the fragments, could pass for complete poems.

Number 67 *(On a Piece of Music)* I have already discussed in connection with its theory of art; however, it deserves more detailed consideration. The first stanza praises the work of art for the integration of its parts, and the mind of the artist for his power. The second stanza tells us that not even angelic insight, however, can enable us to judge the heart of the artist from his work, since artistic law and the nature of man are distinct from each other. I confess that my interpretation of the latter half of this stanza is more than a little uncertain, but the lines are more than a little obscure, and this is the best that I can do with them; my interpretation seems to fit fairly well into the remainder of the argument. In stanza three we are told that we can judge the worth of the man accordingly as he serves God, or not, and takes the side of right or wrong. Stanza four states the orthodox view that Good is Being, and that Evil is the privation of Being; good is everywhere in some degree, but there are many degrees of it, and since one is forced to choose, one should make the right choice in any situation, should choose the greater good rather than the lesser, and this involves choosing God as a chieftain. In the fifth stanza, we are told that the artist indicated his powers in the work, but only crudely; since the work has already been praised and will be praised again, this appears to indicate a general proposition that the work of art is a very inferior manifestation of the mind of the artist. This I find to be a curious and unsatisfactory view, for although from one point of view the individual soul is doubtless more important than any one of its creations, nevertheless it is in the work of art that the soul has its best opportunity to function with some approach to perfection. In the next two stanzas the poet states that the artist was not absolutely free but had to operate within the limitations of his own nature. The word *therefore,* which introduces the last two stanzas, may seem to refer to the stanzas immediately preceding, in which case a deterministic doctrine would be indicated in those stanzas. I think, however, that there is no such doctrine there, and that the connective refers to the whole argument as thus

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far given, or to a stanza of summary, unwritten but implied, and just preceding it. Such a stanza would make some such statement as this: we have seen that man as man is a part of the moral order, but that his works of art, no matter how beautiful they may be, give no inkling of his moral nature and are thus inferior to the man himself. *Therefore,* say these last two stanzas, art is outside of the moral order and is merely a minor though beautiful end in itself. The poem is a curiously repellent affair as far as I am concerned: it offers a view of art which seems to me not only untrue but unworthy of a serious artist, and it accepts this view, especially in the last two stanzas, with a kind of lyrical enthusiasm which I find very strange—it is almost as if the poet were taking a kind of lyrical flight into irresponsibility for pure love of irresponsibility. The best writing is probably in the fourth stanza; the style in general is not as clear as it should be, with regard to the expression both of thought and of perception.

Number 73 *(Thee God, I come from)* misses being a remarkable poem by an inversion of Hopkins' usual procedure: instead of over-emotionalizing his subject, he treats it almost playfully; there are several passages which put one in mind of *A Child's Garden of Verses.* Number 74 *(To him who ever thought with love of me)* is a fine poem and could well stand among the best minor devotional poems of the seventeenth century.

On the basis of this short and incomplete survey, a survey, however, which is the outcome of almost thirty years' reading of Hopkins, it would appear that the most nearly successful poems are the following: Number 3 *(The Habit of Perfection),* Number 16 *(The Valley of the Elwy),* Number 33 *(Inversnaid),* Number 49 *(St. Alphonsus Rodriguez),* and Number 74 *(To him who ever thought with love of me).* Aside from these pieces one can find poems containing impressive phrases, lines, and even passages, but all of them marred, and marred seriously, by faults of conception and of execution. I believe that Hopkins is a poet who will find his most devout admirers among the young; at the age of eighteen I myself was among his most devout admirers, but my opinion has changed with the passage of time. The young

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as a matter of necessity do not know the best English poetry in sufficiently rich detail to be critical and are more likely to be impressed by novelty than by achievement; they are likely to be somewhat emotional and hence uncritical of emotion in others; they are likely to be given to self-pity at odd moments, and hence sympathetic with chronic self-pity in others. I am not one of those who find failure more impressive than success, though I realize that I am in a minority. I am convinced that Hopkins' reputation will rest ultimately on the five poems I have named, or chiefly upon them. The achievement is distinguished even though the number is small and most of the poems are minor. If one were to name the twelve or fourteen best British poets of the nineteenth century, Hopkins would certainly deserve a place among them, and I think his place will be permanent; but the place is not the place of the greatest nor even of one of the greatest.

Postscript: Peters on Hopkins

This latest book* on the poetry of Hopkins is divided into an introduction and five chapters. The chapters have the following titles: (1) The Meaning of 'Inscape' and 'Instress', (2) 'Inscape' and Canons of Poetry, (3) Current Language Heightened, (4) Perception and Expression of Inscape, (5) Inscaping the Word. The first of these makes an excellent distinction between Hopkins' conception of *inscape* as the individuating form of an object, and *instress* as the force internal to the object and which maintains that form. The second deals very loosely with Hopkins' somewhat loose critical theories. The remaining chapters deal with various aspects of Hopkins' diction and phrasing. There is no discussion of meter. In connection with diction and phrasing, Peters some-

*Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Critical Essay towards the Understanding of his Poetry, by W. A. M. Peters, S.J. Oxford University Press, 1948. $4.50.

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times belabors the obvious, and he sometimes ventures on hyperbolic flights into the remoter regions of fantasy, but his analyses are often helpful and his chief value resides in them—provided the reader be reasonably cautious in reading him.

Peters forces our attention upon certain of Hopkins' ideas which have perhaps never been adequately considered; the trouble is that he seems to do little more than clarify to a greater or a less degree the concepts which Hopkins had in mind and fails utterly to evaluate them or investigate their relationships to comparable ideas in other fields. Peters points out (what we already knew) that Hopkins was greatly preoccupied with the 'inscapes' of natural objects, mainly with reference to the visual aspects of the objects; he emphasizes (what perhaps we have realized less fully) that Hopkins was also preoccupied with his own 'inscape.' The latter preoccupation is scarcely distinguishable from the Romantic preoccupation with self-expression, and Peters discusses it at length in the jargon of self-expressionism, though neither Hopkins nor Peters appears to be aware of this similarity. When Hopkins discovered Scotus, as Peters points out, he recognized the Scotist doctrine of *haecceitas* as a kind of metaphysical explanation of his perception of inscapes, and was delighted with it. I am not as familiar with Scotus as I no doubt should be, but as I understand the matter, the doctrine of *haecceitas* is merely an attempt to describe in metaphysical terms the observable fact of individuation, and it involves no sentimental preference for the preservation of any given state of individuation. But for Hopkins (and Peters approves of this), as for the Romantics, the soul as it is at any given moment is a thing to be cherished and expressed.

Now as nearly as I can understand this matter, which is a troublesome one, we are concerned with two orders of individuation: the intellectual and the material. Aquinas tells us that God is perfect being and that all creatures are in one way or another and in varying measures imperfect. Aquinas is concerned here with intellectual being. This doctrine is not only orthodox Catholic doctrine, but it is generally accepted Christian

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doctrine, and Hopkins and Peters, especially as Jesuits, are presumably committed to it. But if this is true doctrine, then intellectual individuation may be defined in terms purely and simply of kinds and degrees of imperfection, and there is nothing in it to be cherished or admired. If we were all perfect, we should all be precisely alike, for in matters of the mind there is only one perfection. We may, of course, assume the perfect mathematical mind, the perfect poetical mind, and so on, but these would not be perfect minds, they would be perfect only in particular and limited departments. There is only one perfection, and it has no degrees: there are degrees only of imperfection. Lest this concept terrify the timid, let me hasten to add that I see little likelihood of this state of universal perfection in any predictable future. So far as their theory of poetry is concerned, however, our two Jesuits appear to have forgotten that we are fallen men; and Peters writes as if Hopkins were one of the "beautiful souls" of Romantic tradition.

In my terms, it is the business of the poet, not to communicate his own inscape, but to arrive at a true judgment of his subject, whatever it may be; we all have individuality, but few of us have intelligence. Peters and Hopkins remind one of the young lady who was studying art under a French master and who protested against his methods, saying: "But I cannot express my personality when I draw as you tell me," and to whom the master replied: "Mademoiselle, no one except mama is interested in your personality." Hopkins is one of a number of Romantics (Poe is another outstanding example) who have protested against the lack of originality in English poetry and have set out to do something about it. Yet English poetry is beyond much doubt the greatest single body of literature produced in Europe, at any rate this side of the Greeks; and if originality is not greatly in evidence, perhaps originality is not one of the ingredients of greatness. In point of fact, if one will take Donne's *Thou hast made me*, Greville's *Down in the depths*, Jonson's *To Heaven*, or *Though beauty be the mark of praise*, Herbert's *Church Monuments*, and Bridges' *Low Barometer*, or *Eros*, one will find a

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minimum of the eccentricities either of the poets or of their periods, and a great and pervasive similarity of tone and of method. These are among the greatest short poems in English, and the list could be very much extended without damage to the conclusions. Such poets are trying to exhibit the truth, they are not trying to exhibit themselves, and they tend to resemble each other.

The individuation of material objects may well be a different matter, at least in many of their aspects. Physically, there is no such thing as the perfect man: there may well be the perfect boxer, the perfect wrestler, the perfect jockey, or the perfect hurdler, but they will be of different types, and many of their physical characteristics will be irrelevant to their functions. If we assume that Joe Louis represents the type of the perfect boxer, nevertheless the color of his skin has no bearing on his perfection: it happens to be brown; it might as well be white, green, or yellow. When we proceed from this type of material form through the lower animals, the plants, and the minerals, the area of irrelevance increases, the curiosities of accidental forms and relationships become more numerous, and the type of person who is fascinated by natural curiosities may find here a legitimate and harmless pasturage provided he knows what he is doing and does not confuse his activities with activities of a different kind.

If, however, we have a poet who is concerned with the expression of his own inscape (self-expression) and with the inscapes of natural objects and with little else, we may expect him to produce poems which are badly organized, and loosely emotional, and which endeavor to express emotions obscure in their origins in terms of natural details of landscape to which they are irrelevant. And poems of this kind are what Hopkins most often wrote. It is remarkable that not once does Peters analyze a poem from beginning to end. He analyzes passages, lines, phrases, and words; that is, fragments. Hopkins is a poet of fragments for the most part, and it is only if one can enjoy a chaos of details afloat in vague emotion that one can approve the greater part of his work. Peters is invariably a critic of fragments; it appears never

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to have occurred to him that a poem is more than a conglomeration of details, and hence he never discovers the real trouble with Hopkins.

Peters' concept of the poem as a congeries of suggestions is most obvious in his defense of Hopkins' homophones. In *The Windhover,* for example, Peters informs us that *told* has the additional meaning of *tolled;* that *rung* refers not only to an exercise in horsemanship but refers also to little bells ringing on the reins; that *rein* also means *reign.* At this rate *buckle* might well be accepted in every signification that we can find for it in the NED, but when we have done we shall have a much worse poem than I think Hopkins intended. This kind of thing, whether in theory or in practice, represents one of the ultimate stages of Romantic disintegration: when the Society of Jesus has come to this, the rest of us had better take stock of our ideas.

It is true that Peters cites passages from Hopkins to prove that the poet should deal with truth and exhibit earnestness. But neither Hopkins nor Peters would seem to have any idea of what these terms mean in connection with the making of a poem. The truth would seem to be of the kind which I have indicated; the earnestness a confused and violent religious emotion. Two of the most earnest men produced by our civilization were J. J. Rousseau and R. W. Emerson, and both were convinced that they were teaching the truth. It is a pity that the Jesuits, or at least the literary men among them, do not study these two writers along with their Suarez and Loyola; to do so would make better Thomists of them, and would make them sadder and more sober men.

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CHRONICLES

A Doctrine of Aesthetics

WILLIAM EMPSON

THE FOUNDATIONS OF AESTHETICS, by *I. A. Richards, C. K. Ogden,* and *James Wood.* Lear. $2.75.

IT IS AN EXCELLENT THING to have a reprint of this exciting standard work, with all the pictures; and we are given the original page with all its variety of type, which by this time has a certain period charm.* The photographic process works well; even the small print of the long footnotes is clear, and this is an important point because so much of the positive doctrine is coyly reserved for them. The reprint gives one an interesting opportunity to reconsider the doctrine.

The impact of the Ogden-Richards line of criticism, a quarter of a century ago, was on literature much more than on the visual arts; and the interest of this book was that it was a determined effort to keep the whole variety of possible aesthetic experience clearly in view. The theoretical talk, while of the most relentlessly high abstraction, was to be kept ruthlessly short; even so, most of this short text was to be concerned with showing why other theorists were misleading. Meanwhile the reader was continually exposed to the shock of unintroduced quotations (often in translation) showing what a lot of good literary styles there are. Music could only be handled by short references. But the reader had sixteen illustrations, from Negro and Egyptian and Indian and Chinese and (rather impressively) Victorian visual art, and so on; and the selection was an impressive proof that the authors could really swallow the whole variety of the aesthetic world and still pick out the best. The contrast between the laboured dryness of the text and the astonishment of the illustrations made it a new kind of book, which it still is.

The main argument of the text is that people have meant a great variety of things by Beauty—sixteen meanings of the word are tabulated—and that though a unifying concept can be adumbrated in a general way at the end one need not expect people to stick to that. So far from sticking to it, they had better go on meaning by the word whatever they want to talk about within its ambiance; but then if they choose to write systems of aesthetics they had better not spend their time jumping from one of these ideas to

*One wishes, however, that the publishers had not been averse to indicating on the flyleaf that this book *is* a reprint, of a work first published in England over twenty-five years ago.

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another in an unconscious manner. "It is easy for anyone who is not clear as to the question he is trying to answer to hover between several views, according to the interest or context with which he is momentarily concerned" says one of the footnotes (p. 47).

I have nothing to say against any of this; I think it is very fine. But there is an inherent tug between the tentative solution of the problem, offered in the last chapter, and the theory of Multiple Definition presented before. This is inherently concerned to say that in such cases one should tabulate the sixteen or more meanings of the term in question and expect nothing further. What you have gained by your tabulation is that you can no longer be deceived—never again will an argument by an aesthetician prevent you from appreciating something unusual but good, or force you into admiring a narrow type of mysticism. But if the last chaper gives the answer, the proper meaning for the word, and furthermore if all the deluded aestheticians were actually fumbling after this solution, so that they would be convinced once they had been given it, then the whole position is quite different. All their sentences are simply wrong even from their own point of view, and they could be made to see it, had we but world enough and time. This fundamental ambivalence of course makes the book more interesting. But after the lapse of a generation one ought to be able to form some kind of view about which side holds the field, whether the Multiple Definition theory or the Synaesthesis theory has survived. If they both survive for ever they are only another of those tedious pairs of frustrated Kilkenny cats, like Aristotle and Plato.

The extreme brevity and caution, not to say timidity, of the final chapter puts the weight in favour of the Multiple Definition technique. But I have long been inclined to believe that the Ogden-Richards programme really did say what Beauty is, though of course only in a rough, tentative manner. If so it is rather embarrassing for them; they are left with an Absolute Beauty on their hands, a baby which they never expected to have the trouble of bringing up. For that matter when Professor Richards wrote *The Principles of Literary Criticism*, not long after, he felt he needed to put in a chapter which in effect saddled him with an Absolute Goodness, an even more unwelcome baby. It is a familiar paradox; any serious attempt at establishing a relativity turns out to establish an absolute; in the case of Einstein the velocity of light, and I understand a good deal more by this time.

It seems to me that twenty years ago we were too frightened of absolutes, because of a confusion with politics which even the most abstract mind can hardly escape. To believe in an absolute goodness or beauty does no political harm, so long as you don't believe that you yourself have got a secret ticket into its bedroom which you can put up for sale. As soon as a body of priests or commissars or what not is organized (as has been done so often) on the specific basis of claiming that each such official has been issued with the secret

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key—there you have got something to worry about. Once these two ideas are separated there is no reason, I think, to be shocked by the idea of an absolute Goodness or Beauty, which mankind can in varying degrees approach but must not claim to have attained. Indeed a theorist on Beauty who tries to approach it is merely doing his job. Suppose the authors of this book had not put in any constructive reflections of their own, but had merely shown that all other theorists were muddle-headed; surely one would have felt that the book was sterile and even small-minded. It was only because one felt they had something to say that they could put across impressively their alternative to saying anything, their theory of Multiple Definition. But to put forward any theory, however modestly, is to suggest that it is true and therefore presumably "absolute." No doubt it is good manners and good tactics to keep your claims moderate, and then you can also set out to give a survey of what everyone else has said, and even claim that this gives a basis on which any later attempt to reach an Absolute must build. But you could not well combine this with a claim that you had refuted all Absolutist theories.

The main question of detail about the book, it seems to me, is the treatment of Emotions. In this intellectualist atmosphere they seem to be given a rather forced welcome, as distinguished foreign visitors. In questions of literature I feel I know what the pioneer Ogden-Richards work was doing; what they say about the Emotive Functions of Language is true and important, but was expressed in such an over-simplified way as to be liable to mislead literary critics. But that is a very simple case; after all we know a good deal about our own language. It is much harder to know your way about Emotion in the visual arts, for instance in some fascinating African fetish, where you pretty certainly don't feel what the sculptor and his original public felt, and yet the emotional force of the thing is pretty certainly what makes it good. At least this is the natural way to phrase the matter, but I am not sure that talking about Emotions is any help. What seems clear is that the internal goings-on when you appreciate the fetish are much less in reach of argument than the goings-on when you appreciate an English poem. This is what makes it plausible to talk about Pure or Significant Form. The kind of thing the book says is this: "If the emotion is refined and developed, and general participation is made possible, it gains additional value" (p. 55). *Refining* seems a very unfortunate word; in fact you could argue that the real job of the artist is to learn how to refine the treatment without refining the original emotion at all. The main thing the book has to say on the topic is to agree with Tolstoy in his "most original tenet" (p. 61), that the test of Emotion in art is its universality, or at least its width of appeal. This is right, I think, but as soon as you try to estimate width of possible appeal you are let in for endless problems about what the public would accept if they had the opportunity to. I find my students in Peiping are very strong on Tolstoy, and when I agree with their judgments this line of talk seems to me simply bad tactics. For instance they tend to justify

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their interest in Chinese folksongs, and modern music based on them, by saying that however vulgar these tunes may be they are universally enjoyed. But I think the sensible thing to say is that however ancient and deeply rooted they may be they are still fresh and beautiful. The only effect of the Tolstoyan principle is that they disparage the thing which they rightly want to praise. Perhaps the real test of an aesthetic theory, at any rate while so little is known about the matter, is how far it frees the individual to use his own taste and judgment; it must be judged in terms of practice rather than abstract truth. But then again, one could reply, the Ogden-Richards intellectualist approach is the safest for this purpose too; because after you have been faced with the variety of aesthetic theories you are less likely to have your judgment distorted by any one of them.

The final chapter is concerned to give a psychological account of the experience of beauty, in terms of how the work of art affects the structure of impulses in the individual. Here again, it is not clear what test of the theory could be applied; the usefulness of the thing is chiefly to show that the scientific picture of the world is not *necessarily* at loggerheads with the aesthetic one. If you felt that it was, that would be another factor likely to bemuse your judgment. The chief puzzle of the treatment by impulses is that you need to distinguish between a Balance and a Deadlock of impulses, and the only obvious difference is that one is called good and the other bad. However, "We might describe balance as a conflict of impulses solving itself in the arousal of the other impulses of the personality" (p. 77). It seems very doubtful how this formula would apply to a Buddhist mystic, for example; he would consider that the process of meditation was excluding "other impulses of his personality," but you could argue that the other impulses do get absorbed in some passive but unharmful way, so that he has a genuine "balance" under the terms of the definition. Here again, the trouble with the theory is not that it appears wrong on fuller examination but that it turns out to say extremely little. One feels in reading the book that it is just on the verge of answering all sorts of important questions; this feeling I suspect comes more from its aesthetic side than from its theoretical one, but may still be true.

Looking back after nearly thirty years, in a more disastrous period, I find I wish that the authors had been more opinionated, though at the time no doubt they felt that would be greedy and impure—to have chatted about their own preferences would have kept the book from being universal. The book had better have ended quite positively, even if we would now be saying it ended wrongly. I am haunted by a feeling that they had something else to say which did not get said. To be sure, the three authors are all still alive, but they are sure to have forgotten what it was—that is always the punishment for not speaking out. Of course I also feel this gives a certain miraculous quality to the text; I am never sure that I have not missed a divine revelation lying about somewhere in very tiny print. It is a valuable book.

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Hamlet Through a Telescope

GEORGE BARBAROW

LOOKING THROUGH A GLASS that reduces the field of view as it magnifies, we often see more of a thing's particulars and less of its whole than we should. So it is with Laurence Olivier's film *Hamlet,* which requires notice of many details that unintentionally distract us from the action of the drama. Seen in various lights, the Prince's decorative braid is a fascinating study. In some of the shots, the King's crown has a broken "pearl". The eye compares varying degrees of baldness in courtiers, is interested in the shapes of knobs on chair-backs, and remarks the chief actor's heavy make-up. This battle with non-dramatic visual images continues throughout the picture. Moreover, the "telescope" moves about a great deal, ostensibly only to follow the action, but also presenting fresh perspectives that demand new visual adjustments almost constantly, always diverting attention away from the speech, where most of the play's significance lies. Meanwhile, we discover that the text has been cut to something less than half.

The most important effect of the cutting is the weakening of the real main-spring of the drama, which is the conflict between Claudius and Hamlet. In the play, almost everything that happens is a consequence of this struggle between the "mighty opposites," but in the film version, as in most cut productions, the King is diminished simply to a weak man who is guilty of a crime, far from mighty and not dignified enough to be an opposite. The "opposite" is supposed to be in Hamlet himself, a noble man who fights alone or merely struggles to break out of a paper bag, depending upon the amount and kind of sympathy he inspires; Olivier, pointing to the theme of indecision ("This is a tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind"), tries to submerge the less respectable *motives* of revenge and ambition. The King is lamentably feeble, bereft of important governmental functions: Fortinbras, symbolizing a menacing foreign affair of state, is not even mentioned, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the functionaries designated to treat with the internal issue of the unstable Prince Hamlet, are likewise eliminated. On top of this, Claudius speaks woefully, his voice decorated with quavers, hesitations, and incipient groans. We are forced to believe Hamlet when he compares his uncle unfavorably with his father, for the characterization of Claudius appears to be drawn primarily from Hamlet's opinions about him; we are supposed to despise the King, the better to "identify" ourselves with the Prince. It would be healthier

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to have two male stars, one playing a strong King; then it might be possible for us to see a great deal more in the play than the fluctuations of a fluttering mind, to see that it is Claudius who directs the events after the killing of Polonius, and to see that there is something pitiful in his failure, and terrible too; this would be consistent with Horatio's speech to the English and to Fortinbras at the end of the play (not the film); it would be a tragedy of "purposes mistook," not of purposes merely unformed.

Of course, this criticism applies as much to most common views and performances of *Hamlet* as to the current exhibition, which attempts to present Hamlet as the sole and dominating figure, even going so far as to leave out some of his severest self-recriminations, "O! what a rogue and peasant slave am I . . .", and "How all occasions do inform against me . . ." This approach prefers to admire a star, and through the star a character instead of a drama. It elevates the soliloquy "To be or not to be" into a sentimental and antidramatic principle, as something remembered in isolation from events, and makes the speech fit to be printed on the back of the souvenir programme and (in antique type) on a page of *Life* magazine. Throughout, there is an obsessive attention to the figure of Hamlet, magnified by the "telescope" in a way that no stage performance could enlarge him except by using a seven-foot star and having Pygmies playing the other parts.

This is by no means a film in the creative or cinematic sense, for the structure, action, and speech are taken directly from the Shakespeare text, and the camera is supposed to do little more than transmit what is left of the drastically shortened play. Nevertheless, that dynamic little machine here demonstrates its power to confuse the spectator, and so to defeat the actors.

The camera begins to move at the very start, and seems to be moving almost all the time. It goes in and out of close-ups, around corners, up steps and down, along walls, and it flies through the air, its main province being the castle's interior and its main subjects, the actors. The capacity to reveal the subjects closely and clearly as they go about their business is valuable in the minor sense that we don't have to strain ourselves to see what happens, but it is also harmful because the movement and the multiplicity of viewpoints insidiously conspire to destroy one of the most important powers of a stage performance, the *fixed* viewpoint, which, like the frame of a painting, establishes, limits, and concentrates the action in a small space where the actors make simple movements and communicate the drama through speech. At the play, the set is static, and the rest is up to the players; in the film *Hamlet*, where the stage is a good-sized castle, the whole scene cannot be observed at one time, but only variable portions of it. We are on the stage, within the scene itself, constantly attempting visual orientation of ourselves; moreover, the camera-eye is not under our control, nor under the control of the actors. We are moved and

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turned this way and that by a superior, godlike spectator; not knowing how quickly a new shot or turn will come, we nervously adjust ourselves, and prepare for another adjustment. The actors and their words inevitably lose their authority in this tense environment, for the camera has the power to make us look more than listen. We often miss the beginning of a speech because we are studying a new shot, and forget the ending because another shot has come, or because the camera is in motion again; if a speech is said during four shots, it becomes four speeches instead of one. The seventeen scenes brought over from the play are broken into a series of about 450 pieces, the majority of them with a moving camera, each shot and each camera movement demanding attention, if only subconscious attention.

The memory carried away from the theatre is not one of sharply differentiated scenes, but of differentiated *shots*, which is true of any film, except that a true film has its own form, where the shots work, one with another, to produce a total, harmoniously integrated, visual effect. Here no particular filmic effect is achieved, or even attempted, for this is a play; nevertheless, there is a formless visual "design" that remains as a shifting, chaotic blur. The seventeen scenes, broken to bits, swim about in the memory, parts of them blended with other parts, their continuity absurdly deranged. The speeches are almost forgotten; at best, they are poorly remembered. Trifles stand out: a close-up of the two swords, one sharp, the other "bated"; the pikes of the guards extending outside the frame; real waves breaking just before "To be or not to be"; Polonius holding a torch. These trifles stick in the mind.

It is no "trifle", however, but a serious disruption, when a shot strongly interferes with a speech, blanking-out whole lines. I recall two extreme shots of Hamlet that accompany the short soliloquy at the end of Act III, Scene 2. " 'Tis now the very witching time of night" is begun with Hamlet's nose in shadow, profile in huge close-up. The shot is so sensational in itself that I remember hearing only the most sensational words, ". . . now could I drink hot blood . . .", the rest being spoken, but not comprehended. Associated with the same speech, there is another sensational shot that shows Hamlet climbing stairs seen diagonally across the frame from below, lower left in darkness, saw-tooth of the steps in silhouette, lighted strongly from above, and I remember hearing him say something about a dagger. The book reveals that the line is "I will speak daggers to her, but use none." The strong shot amplified the "dagger" for me, obliterating the point made by the line; needless to say, the speech itself was reduced to a shambles—with the text before me, I am unable to decide whether it was cut or wholly spoken, or what was left in if it *was* cut. Furthermore, I can't remember for certain whether there was another weak shot between the two strong ones, or not. This kind (but not this extreme degree) of conflict between sight and sound is present throughout the picture, the language being the loser, despite its being spoken very slowly.

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There is "telescoping" in another sense. The elimination of much important material that is in cut speeches, and especially the disappearance of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, results not so much in a tightening and intensifying of the play, as in a diminishment of grandeur. This condensation, which is one of the diseases of the time, gives rise to a feeling of emptiness and lackweight. The play-within-the-play is reduced to dumbshow only, is over quickly, and seems a small thing to throw the whole court into a frantic uproar with the King's departure; and the slicing-out of the schoolfellows, with whom Hamlet does battle during much of the play, leaves no real buffer between Hamlet and Claudius. Part of their business is taken by the overworked Polonius; meanwhile, the castle seems a little understaffed, and one has the strange feeling at times that the King and the Prince might meet by chance in an empty hallway, jostle elbows, and knife each other, with nobody on hand to part them! And the events are too often like a family quarrel without national implications, whereas the full play is concerned enough with the idea of kingship to make the crown more than the piece of stage property it seems to be in the picture.

By contrast, Ophelia stands out with far greater prominence. The part is cut hardly at all, and proportionately, the role has double its usual value. Added to this double size is the direction of young Jean Simmons for pictorial effect, with grace, beauty, and infantile cuteness. The character has a quadruple shimmer.

Unlike the others, Ophelia is presented consistently as a movie character. How she looks is more important than what she says. The camera shows her walking around a good deal, it *visualizes* Hamlet's "madness" for her, it follows her on a flower-picking expedition, and it watches her drown. She accompanies her father's famous advice to Laertes with pantomime, attracting more attention to herself than the speaker can get, and her singing and flower distribution (although a little too reminiscent of Bennington College) is nicely suited to the camera. However, the filmic treatment of only one character fits awkwardly in the play. Laertes looks more like a rack to hang flowers on than a man horrified to raging action, and the mad Ophelia, visualized where the others are not, dominates the devastated Fourth Act, instead of being a catalytic of events in the Fifth. The very consistency of this visual treatment, being "natural" to the movie medium, throws the play out of balance, and becomes a type of show-stealing. When Hamlet tosses Ophelia down upon the stone steps ("get thee to a nunnery"), it is an act of physical violence that is more immediate and striking than it could be on a stage. It almost seems to be her main motive for going mad, and to get her back on the right road to insanity, Olivier really ought to show her watching the killing of Polonius.

Olivier, the star and director, becomes violent in other places too, doubtless not realizing the amplifying powers of the camera and sound track. He signals

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each appearance of the Ghost by synchronizing a series of recorded heartbeats with shots that are thrown in and out of focus like a flashing neon sign. The effect on the audience is of small-earthquake proportions, and the effect on the Prince is one of frantic excitement. He appears to go out of his head, to the acompaniment of swirling clouds, symphonic chords, and raving words. Using his sword as a cross, he follows the apparition to the place where the expository information is given to him, and he falls into a faint. It is juvenile and undignified, as well as noisy; Hamlet seems more frightened than inspired. The same sort of "melodrama" is the high point of the scene between Gertrude and Hamlet, where they get to shouting and screaming at each other in close-up, at a peak of sound close to the capacity of the theatre's loudspeaker; then the entertainment is thrown a notch higher with the final Ghostly visitation, and the actor responds by falling and crawling on the floor. When the scene ends, Hamlet's "Good night, Mother" (which is fine irony if the scene is played more calmly) is farcically ridiculous, an absurd burlesque.

This film shows the obvious hostility between stage and screen most plainly in the presentations of soliloquies, those formalizations of thoughts into speech especially associated with *Hamlet*. It is clearly a difficult problem to get them said with effect in a medium where, willy-nilly, the attention of the audience is in a state of constant visual beguilement. The safest way to have the words understood for themselves is to hold the camera steady for the length of the speech, which runs the danger of having the shot (isolated by its long duration) remembered out of all proportion to other shots. A second way is to use the words as an accompaniment to and an interpretation of visual images that are in turn accompaniments and interpretations; this amounts to trying to say the soliloquy twice-at-once, and is nearly impossible to control, for the individual spectators will tend to disagree with specific visual interpretations of the words. To reverse an old saw, if a picture is worth ten thousand words, a word is worth ten thousand pictures. They don't mix well. They fight, and do each other damage, as movies and music fought themselves into a state of weary chaos in Disney's *Fantasia*. And even if a perfect correspondence is found, what have we left but redundancy?

Olivier has tried both ways, although not going far into the second (merely accompanying a mute figure with "thought" words), and has not solved the problem. The soliloquy is an Elizabethan play-device, stylized for a particular function; no matter how it is presented, it seems forced and false on the screen, where the camera has robbed the actor of his authority by competing with him. Instead of a real, solid, flesh-and-blood, discoursing *man*, the speaker is now a two-dimensional *representation* of a man, a flat shadow in black-and-white, whose voice is electrically separated from his body. He is a representation who can no longer command the stage, who exists, distorted and blown-up,

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only on sufferance of an impatient eye, not the eye of the spectator, but the eye of the director.

Still another artistic dilemma is posed by the latest film *Hamlet*, where the seemingly inescapable fragmentation-effect of the shifting viewpoint on the structure of whole scenes is always present. The play-form at its best succeeds in bringing conflicts into focus at one time and in one place, a relatively constricted place, not necessarily real or natural in a literal and imitative sense, but made real through workable conventions developed over hundreds of years. The time is the length of the scene, and the place is a stage small enough to contain the actors in easy purview. To increase the size of the stage in all directions as by "explosion," to have no purview, but instead multitudes of small views, and then to act play-scenes, is to lose the power of constriction while making a latently nervous and flighty camera the unwilling servant of the alien scenic pattern. In Olivier's *Hamlet*, where "morn, in russet mantle clad" comes too quickly for belief, where giant shadowy figures overpower speech, where individual shots stand out by themselves (separate from the whole, and even from their immediate fellows), the scenes are disintegrated, despite a sincerely dedicated attempt to act them from the text.

There are two other ways to present the Hamlet story on the screen, one absolutely literal, the other creative. Although it is unlikely that either will be tried, it may be well to suggest them.

The first method would certainly do less damage to the play than the current film does. It would make the camera and microphone as much as possible the exact recorders of a stage performance. The camera should be fixed at one point, and remain in this position without moving, while each scene is played out before it. The machine would thus have a single but very important function: to be a non-participant observer of the play. It should be totally subservient to the scenic action and speech, while rigidly maintaining the physical boundaries of the scene. Everything should be held within the fixed frame; it would then be up to Shakespeare (who has done quite well in this work) to provide the drama, and it would be up to the actors to do their acting in compliance with the play. The spectator would have "the best seat in the house," would not be burdened with constant readjustments to new views, and would quickly thank the camera for not interfering. It muddles a play (written for one viewpoint) if one hops about visually during a scene; this can easily be discovered by moving four or five times to different seats during a theatrical performance, getting new perspectives each time, and then coming away from the theatre with jumbled memories. The same is true of newsreels of prize fights: where one viewpoint is held throughout a round, the pattern of the round, provided exclusively by the fighters, is quickly grasped and retained, but where several other shots are cut in (close shots,

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angles from below, slow motion, etc.), a new visual pattern is created, conflicting with the fight pattern and diminishing and confusing it without gaining anything except a couple of magnified details; the film editor who thus "comments" is neither a spectator nor one of the fighters, but a *fourth* personality who fatally interrupts and frustrates the timing and execution of the boxing manoeuvres. Compare this with Riefenstahl's *Olympia,* which brilliantly demonstrates the record-function of a single viewpoint in presenting the 800 metre race from start to finish with no cutting and no more panning than is necessary to hold the field of runners within the frame. With these examples in mind, it seems certain that a play could retain some of its dramatic shape on the screen, the product having the values and the obvious defects of symphonies heard through a phonograph.

The second, or "creative" cinematic method of presenting Hamlet is more difficult, and could be rewarding as a piece of film art, depending for its shape upon the imagination of its maker, who would not be Shakespeare at all. It involves telling an "original" Hamlet story primarily with the camera, from a fairly simple synopsis: a Prince tries to revenge the murder of his father and the "adultery-incest" of his mother. The artist ought to abjure Shakespeare for two reasons: to avoid being trapped in the fruitless, imitative task of trying to find visual images to match great dramatic poetry, and to keep his own imagination free of patterns that are not movie-patterns. The true moviemaker, by sticking to his filmic last, might one day make a better *Hamlet* than Shakespeare's, if we may compare one art with another, but it is clear that he cannot compete on the Elizabethan's home field without being badly mauled and badly mauling, as Sir Laurence is.

Olivier, although unable to control the "telescope," is yet unwilling to make a simple record, and the result is neither drama nor cinema.

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Rhetoric and Technique in J. S. Bach

JOSEPH KERMAN

THE DEMOLITION OF HANDEL left the saddest of all the many gaps in our contemporary repertoire, for excepting Verdi none of the great composers has written so warmly and directly for his audience, and none has been potentially so popular in the best sense of the word. And none has been so popular in the worst sense of the word, and since Orpheus none has been dealt with so savagely by his admirers. The story of Handel's ritual murder bears a moral that fits Bach too close for comfort. For a hundred and fifty years Handel withstood adulation, deification, inflation and Worship by Massed Choirs as bravely as one would have expected of that noble master. The ceremonies at which his music was adored grew more gigantic and more cathedral; rhythm faded away as the tempos dragged to an appropriately pious standstill, the texture fused gently into a fat, devout diapason tone, and melody lost itself among the stentorian echoes of four thousand celebrant voices. All in all a pleasant atmosphere of vague majesty and uplift completely replaced the music; at which point it suddenly dawned on everybody that Handel, like the man in the London Club, had already been dead on his feet for quite some time. The shock that this discovery caused at the beginning of the century was such that now it seems that nothing can resurrect him from the dusty pages of the Novello catalogue. The Dead March, as usual, is from *Saul*.

Exactly the same kind of slow strangulation has been exerted on Bach for many years, and in consequence he has been steadily losing interest and meaning for the general intellectual public. Moreover with the Bach performances things have been made even more exquisite by the element of Handel emulation; and if Bach, we may be sure, would have cut a poor enough figure in Vauxhall Gardens, he is even more at a loss than Handel in the Crystal Palace. On top of all this, after being learnedly analyzed as gothic, baroque and classical, Bach has finally been sold very successfully as a romantic in the best Wagner tradition—the kiss of death for a large group of more sensitive and up-to-date listeners. Indeed whatever life is left in Bach today is due to the work of a small and miscellaneous group of performers whose success with the musical public as a whole is still slight, but whom I would dignify with the name of a new school of Bach criticism. In music the rediscoveries and reinterpretations by which artists of the past live for the present are accomplished as much by performers as by critics, especially in this country, where there are

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no critics; musical performance is actually a sort of criticism, esoteric, but particularly direct and unencumbered. These musicians have worked largely with Bach's instrumental music, because the instrumental music is easier to do; perhaps the reason that Handel never experienced such a revival, however modest, is that his instrumental music is not solid enough to afford a foothold in an uphill battle.

The external mark that unites them all, Biggs, Weinrich, Landowska, Kirkpatrick, Schneider, Busch, the New York Bach Circle, Mendel, Boepple and now Shaw and Scheide, is a desire to return to the performing conditions of Bach's own time. They use the shrill baroque organ rather than the huge romantic instrument of our expensive churches, the harpsichord rather than the piano, a lively and agile orchestra and chorus, which has to be a very small well-trained group. They play Bach, not Bach-Siloti nor Bach-Stokowski; they do not shun the paternalistic (perhaps even paternal) support of the musicologists. They sing in German, they realize continuos, their tempos are bright, their *espressivo* most severely controlled. Adolf Busch has been fairly successful with this sort of thing in New York; Landowska is Landowska, and Biggs has his quiet reputation. But the most far-reaching success for this new approach seems to be that recently achieved by Robert Shaw, one of the youngest additions to the group. Mr. Shaw does nothing particularly new, and in many ways he is less effective than some older choral conductors, even in New York; he has much to learn about musical sensitivity, especially in matters of rhythm. His Bach performances, which are simple and vigorous, earnest, high-minded and self-effacing, are also almost disarmingly vulnerable. But it is oversophistication, not a little bluntness, that is so bad for Bach, and fastidiousness about Shaw's work can very easily amount to snobbery. It was a matter of some importance that something be done about Bach's choral music after fifty years of academic talk and well-intentioned, unnoticed performances. All that was actually required was enterprise, an adult approach to the music and a respect for the man above archaeology or hero-worship.

Mr. Shaw has not only made a solid impression in the most official New York musical circles, but in the last few years has also sold the RCA-Victor Company, among other things, six record-sets of Bach choral music; which is more than the Schola Cantorum, the Cantata Singers, the Westminster Choir, the Bethlehem Bach Choir, Pittsburgh and points west have succeeded in doing, all together, since the invention of the phonograph. They are an album of alto arias sung by Marian Anderson, Cantata 4, *Christ lag in Todesbanden* and Cantata 140, *Wachet auf* (these probably the most famous Bach cantatas), the Mass in B-minor, and the Magnificat. These criteria may seem crass, but I think one has to remember that the general intellectual public, to which music simply must address itself if it is to survive at all, is made up of individuals who cannot read music and whom all the cantata editions in the world

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bring not an inch closer to any of the realities of the music. The issue of a set of records is analagous to the publication of a book that has heretofore circulated in manuscript among a select few; and a significant performance adds a critical commentary that can elucidate for the many and that is of more influence upon the cognoscenti, the musicians themselves, than they are ever willing to admit. The real superiority of Shaw's performances derives at least partly from the fact that his chorus is a semi-professional group that can sing. It has been made possible, presumably, by his participation in such materialistic ventures as the Waring Pennsylvanians and *Carmen Jones*. Shaw deserves as much credit for the remarkable purity of his motives after having made the big-time as for his intelligent and single-minded choice of artistic advice.

I hope this activity bodes well for the movement as a whole; at any rate it is especially welcome to have some publicity on Bach's choral music, which is so very little known. Despite the rather sour remarks of Mr. B. H. Haggin, who evidently believes that Bach tossed off most of his cantatas with unconcern and high speed, simply to satisfy his employers, the fact is that choral music is far and away Bach's most important genre. The two-hundred-odd church cantatas, the secular cantatas, the motets, the Masses, the Passions, the Magnificat, represent a significant majority of his total output; as a rough check, twenty-nine volumes of the complete Bach edition (just republished) are required for this choral music as against eight for the keyboard instruments and seven for orchestral and chamber music. What is more, most of this comes from the second half of Bach's creative life, from the time he settled in Leipzig in 1723 till his death twenty-seven years later; while almost all the instrumental music comes from Cöthen in the preceding years, and a good part of the organ music too relates to Bach's preliminary posts as a church-organist. Bach without his cantatas is like Palestrina without his masses, Handel without his operas, Schubert without his songs. Bach's ambition in life was to praise God with sacred choral music, and this music assumes some further importance, too, as his aesthetic is examined with more care.

II

The older an old master, the simpler is his basic aesthetic psychology; but this very simplicity makes difficulties for later and more cynical times. The image that guides conventional Bach criticism is Warner Brothers' unhappy genius, working assiduously at masterpiece after masterpiece under the spur of romantic inspiration. This has enough basis in nineteenth-century fact: Beethoven sketching through a dozen dirty notebooks before touching a score, Brahms methodically destroying manuscripts unworthy of his loftiest efforts. But it was only with the beginning of romanticism, say 1770 at the very earliest, that the artist began to consider his every serious work a fairly momentous affair upon which his reputation with the world at large, not to say

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posterity, must rest. Bach and his contemporaries were too busy writing music to worry much about its greatness. They wrote rapidly and unerringly for occasions that followed one another too regularly to admit much pondering or polishing of scores, and certain simplicities of their style, notably formal, necessarily correspond to these working methods. They were craftsmen more than artists, professional musicians with a job to do and no nonsense, but their art is no less great for the absence of pomposity in their attitude towards it. You can reject this whole aesthetic if you like, though you will find that much of it lingers in a man like Haydn, who was eighteen years older than Goethe, and you will also find the still older music still more peculiar, to say nothing of our present *Gebrauchsmusik*. But it will not do to ignore it in Bach's best works and blame it for all the others. Of course much of Bach is less remarkable than his greatest pieces; it is a slim appreciation that values an art for its masterpieces alone. I think only *a priori* reasoning can support the view that the baroque composers fall below their finest efforts any more consistently than their more self-conscious romantic successors.

And of all the baroque craftsmen, Bach was the most consummate. No composer, contemporary or otherwise, has ever based his art so completely upon a bewildering complexity of detail, a luxuriance that almost amounts to fussiness. Absence of formal training need not frighten anyone away from Bach's fugues and other notoriously brainy pieces; composers do not write for a professional audience, and Bach's extravagance of detail is perfectly apparent to the amateur, in every possible musical dimension. Harmony changes with Bach more rapidly than with other composers; the change is a sort of oscillation, for when approaching a key Bach uses a sort of gloriously irregular spiral which ruminates, passes now to the subdominant, now sequentially through the mediants, and finally, as it reaches the key, seems paradoxically to have found it with the utmost certitude. Above these magnificent basses Bach writes an infinite number of contrapuntal lines, or might as well, for he certainly has more at one time than the ear can apprehend—"wiggly counterpoint" that weaves back and forth like a fine tapestry, always circling on itself and crossing back, and yet somehow always perfectly sure in its own mind as to how it has to come out. The melodic lines themselves are sinuous, broken into long flexible strings of ornamental notes that tease the harmony and circle and contort themselves continuously to meet the other contrapuntal members. Handel, the opera composer, works *al fresco* with the slimmest means possible; Bach uses the maximum resource to produce an incredibly complex miniature. The tendency with Bach is always to get up close and examine the brushstrokes; as you stand back the whole looks like a busy microcosm. For against all this detailing the entire composition necessarily takes on a compact, doll's-house sense of clockwork, a certain mechanization that Mr. Virgil Thomson chooses to call the "chug-chug-chug" spirit, and that Tovey refers to as Bach's perfect punctuali-

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ty. This is characteristic of Bach's form; nothing is left to the imagination, and every detail of the elaborate texture falls neatly and inevitably into its assigned place within a scheme that is exactly right and exhaustive to the point of naïveté. All the seams show in Bach because he wants them to; the construction itself, the technique, is an essential part of his aesthetic.

Every time Thomson hears a musical composition, he asks himself: "Is this just a piece of clockwork, or does it also tell time?" Bach tells time; he tells time with chronometer punctuality even in some of the big fugues, like the *Gratias—Dona nobis pacem* of the Mass, which are absolutely neutral in expression and exist simply as monuments to his technique. One can demonstrate that the clockwork is magnificent; I think one has to feel how it comes to life by a mysterious technical apotheosis. It has been said that Bach's thickly knit counterpoint, with its restless lines twisting and turning in and around each other like baroque columns, around the harmonic notes, all within a harmonic space that is itself constantly shifting in time, that all this is the finest realization of baroque art in music. As far as texture is concerned, nobody can doubt it; but I imagine that the great baroque composers from Monteverdi to Handel would have been repelled alike by Bach's artisan cult of technique and by his sense of form, with all the lines scurrying into place like a moving-picture of an explosion run backwards. This is the heritage of the petty organists and *Kapellmeister* of Protestant Germany, Pachelbel, Zachow, Georg Böhm, Johann Walther, all the old Bachs and the worthies of the German *Denkmäler*. They are all poky little composers; their clockwork ticks along rustily to this day, but has long ceased telling time. Bach transcends them by imagination and personality, yes, but even more by a sheer personal triumph of technique, of which he himself was aware and not a little proud. The great figure in German art before Bach, Albrecht Dürer, was also a proud man, and for something of the same reasons. Once again it is a complete misunderstanding to overlook clockwork in the finest works, and deprecate it in all the others. It forms the frame of reference for every note that Bach ever put to score.

The expressivity of baroque art in general is derived from the theatre, and of baroque music from the opera of Lully and Scarlatti and Steffani; the opera that was the highest aspiration of every composer of the time. And so all the pathos, grief, triumph and good cheer of baroque music, powerful as it is, has a rhetorical and impersonal quality that separates it quite distinctly from the romantic music to which it has been too facilely compared. The baroque composer strikes the posture of an emotion, instead of exploring it within himself; every emotion is filtered through some great gesture, some conventional exaggeration, and though it may well become intense, sentimental or lachrymose, the footlights always stand between the composer and his audience. Bach is never in his music, always safely outside somewhere, pulling the stops, in a way that even Mozart never seems to be, to say nothing of Beethoven and

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Wagner. It is this "abstractness", this extroverted emotion in Bach that makes him seem a "grey" composer to Mr. Eric Blom and to many others. But nothing can be more moving and more dignified than great rhetoric; it can be perfectly individual, too, though it is not in its nature to be introspective. Bach can vivify stage conventions into great and powerful emotions, but they are generalized emotions, universal if you like, and his personality is manifested in that very power of vivification rather than in a personal quality of the feeling. In a sense, then, it is true that the prayers that open and close Bach's Mass are prayers of Christianity, not of the composer alone; and I do not know that we feel the same about the *Missa Solemnis* or the *Ode to Joy*. We hear a great deal about the neglected minor masters; the one thing that separates them irrevocably and discretely from the great composers is that shattering force of imagination that produces music at the same time utterly original and quintessential, unprecedented and yet magnificently right. There is little to say before such works as the *Suscepit Israel* of the Magnificat, the opening pages of the B-minor Mass, the *Confiteor*, the *Dona nobis pacem*. They speak as unmistakably in terms of rhetoric as they operate within the sublime mathematics of Bach's technique.

The presence of a text in no way diminishes the capital importance of technique in Bach's vocal music, though of all his work this is the most consistently and immediately expressive. Bach's imagination responded automatically to a literary subject. The chorale-preludes, since words are understood, are expressive by proxy, the most expressive of the instrumental music; the other instrumental pieces, which often tend toward abstraction, are expressive only by analogy. Nor is this simply a matter of word-painting; Bach, like all the baroque composers, was expressively most at ease with a text, and since the cantata as he knew it had been invented quite frankly to imitate the opera in church, not only are all the musical and literary conventions of the stage implicit in it, but the sentiment naturally flows in the impersonal rhetoric of the baroque tradition. Forty years ago Pirro and Schweitzer discovered in Bach's vocal music a typically elaborate system of word-illustration that he applies almost automatically as soon as he sees an "expressive" word coming. It is well, however, to realize right away that this element of Bach's style, however fundamental to his composition, is not a purely musical affair and as such is a secondary and considerably less potent means of expression. In vocal and instrumental music alike expressivity for Bach is first of all a matter of music, pure music, and connexions between the music and the words are of more aesthetic interest to the rational man of the eighteenth century than to the listener in the twentieth. Still you cannot understand Bach without them, and they make an admirable corrective for the Masterpiece theory that Bach, as a great master, must somehow be rather less human and more awful than the rest of us. They may be neat or labored, moving or quaint; there are

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places in Bach—in the *Esurientes* of the Magnificat, in Verse III of *Christ lag*—that make no sense at all without an understanding of this word-painting, and none of the vocal music can be grasped in all its breadth without detailed analysis along these lines. Though I cannot see much aesthetic value to it, exegetically it remains another dimension of Bach's art, and one that obtains in the vocal music only. For the rest, it may be remarked that choral music frequently gives Bach a greater scope than other media afford; both in time, since he has large cyclic arrangements to deal with, and in space, where the *Osanna* of the Mass, for example, uses eight voices with a festival orchestra of three trumpets and timpani, flutes and oboes by twos, strings and continuo. Clockwork is never used to better advantage.

III

The *Dona nobis pacem* of the B-minor Mass, mentioned in passing above, is an abstract fugue of masterly and unprecedented construction. It operates on the principle, well known to a certain romantic tetralogist, that a calm both sublime and *urelementalisch* can be produced by a motionless D-major if you can only carry it off. In form it is as simple as in principle; two great corner sections irrevocably in the tonic, and a brief, almost shadowy bridge of tonal movement between them. The fugue subject is primitive clay of which any man can fashion what he will; with Bach it is to be as immobile and immemorial as the Himalaya Mountains, and so he presents it with its answer some thirteen times, never once moving from the tonic! The fugue itself is quite short, but the immensity of the opening and closing sections is established by this constant repetition of the subject, always from tonic and dominant as though the dim past to which it relates were to predate the evolution of modulation. The function of the second section, which is all of five bars long, is to modulate, but it does not modulate so much as glance dispassionately, fragmentarily, at a group of related keys. The beautifully skilled sequence by which this is manipulated is harmonically the same as that which open Verse III of *Christ lag*, and a hundred other places; but the depth of subtlety that has grown in Bach's technique since Weimar is self-evident as the less stable second subject enters in a new voice at each of the five steps, and the counterpoint thickens acordingly. Now at the very start Bach had abandoned a time-honored advantage, almost consciously, by exposing both his subjects in close stretto. So the final section transcends the beginning not by the polyphonic vigor of stretto, but by the cumulative grandeur of thirteen entries, one on top of the other, in every conceivable arrangement that is again inexorably in the tonic, now uninterrupted and unaccompanied by the weaker second subject. This quality of consummation, rather than climax, is further illuminated as the trumpets, which heretofore have occasionally marched solemnly with the soprano, descend from heaven like the gods of the Venetian opera to join the

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infinite procession with motionless entries of their own, a fifth and sixth voice added for four measures to the normal resource, *ex machina*. The counterpoint is always marvellously new, now tinged with a solid and reassuring subdominant, until at long last the trumpets and all unfold to the first real dominant cadence of the piece. Nothing contributes to the serenity of the whole as much as Bach's postponement of this almost obligatory modulation until *after* the penultimate subdominant glow. The punctuality of the close—there is no other word—is perfectly reflected by so small a detail as the kettledrum rhythm under the full, bright three-trumpet texture.

The imagination to conceive of this *tour de force*, the confidence to undertake it and the technical equipment to rescue it from fiasco are uniquely Bach's. He understood the timelessness and sublimity that are to be derived from a plastic manipulation of purely musical means, variety in repetition and tonal establishment. Its monumental abstraction is no more or no less appropriate to the text *Wir danken dir, Gott, und verkündigen deine Wunder*, for which Bach first wrote it, than to *Gratias agimus tibi, propter magnam gloriam tuam* or *Dona nobis pacem*, as it twice appears in the Mass. Petty points of mechanical connexion to words and phrases disappear before the great truth that this fugue has finally found its place: at the end of a great, impossible epic, the Mass in B-minor. Its qualification for this position, its aesthetic justification for existence, is entirely a musical matter, a matter of transcendental technique. "Listen to this for its own sake"—this is Tovey's only remark on the *Dona nobis pacem*—"and you will find it a worthy and peaceful close to Bach's Mass in honour of the Divine Glory."

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Paris Letter

WALLACE FOWLIE

JANUARY 1949

ALTHOUGH THE PUBLISHING HOUSES are printing fewer new works, the prestige of literature in Paris seems to maintain itself. The new books, even if they are rare, are discussed avidly and the older books are being reread and reevaluated. René Char, for example, associated in the early '30's with surrealism, published this fall a volume of collected poetry written between 1938 and 1948, *Fureur et Mystère* (Gallimard), which has received serious and well-deserved attention.

His work is not hermetic, but it is dense and difficult to read. "The poem," he says, "is the realized love of the desire which has remained desire." (*Le poème est l'amour réalisé du désir demeuré désir.*) The words of Char's language have a peculiar weight. He lives in Provence and his poetry resurrects a world that is both rural and Mediterranean. He describes correspondences and analogies in the Baudelairian tradition, which have the force of incantations. The characters in his poems appear as gigantic statues and the space around them is of a heavy form almost sculpturesque. The air and the light of his country are dominated by the sun. High noon is for Char, as it was for Valéry, the hour when the idea of death can be approached with serene objectivity.

The major characteristic of his poetry seems to be an effort to put men and objects back into a lighting from which they have been withdrawn. He sees them as beings and things which have lost a life that once belonged to them. The poetic act, for Char, is the restoration of that life. In his striking poem on Rimbaud, "Tu as bien fait de partir, Arthur Rimbaud!", he recasts in vigorous lucidity the legend of the Poet. Char's writing shows a boundless confidence in human speech, an effort to collaborate with words and a belief that by means of words the poet will reveal whole regions of experience and knowledge.

In a literary sense, the year 1948 has already been characterized as one of crisis, both from the viewpoint of sale of books and the discovery of new books. And yet it was the year when one publisher, René Massat, had the courage to bring out in eight volumes the complete works of Alfred Jarry. Between 1895 and 1900 Jarry was an important figure in the French literary scene, but it has been his fate, ever since then, to be confused with his own creation, Le Père Ubu, and to have lost his full stature of writer. Breton, Renéville and Marcel Raymond have written about him, but now with the publication of his works, it is quite possible that he will be rediscovered. What has been done in

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criticism for Rimbaud, Lautréamont and Mallarmé remains to be done for Jarry. His subject matter is contemporary: the reign of a special kind of tyranny which threatens the person of man. Ubu is the myth of the loss of man's heart and soul and love.

Within a very short time I have seen in the book-stores five new studies (and there are doubtless others I haven't seen) of Apollinaire. From Switzerland (Pierre Cailler) has come a volume of his posthumous poems, *Ombre de mon amour*, less striking as poems than those of *Alcools* and *Calligrammes*, but valuable in understanding the difficult problem of the poet's eroticism. Apollinaire, with Rimbaud, remains the leading influence on the younger poets. He himself, influenced by so many known and unknown writers, but especially perhaps by Jarry, Nerval and Villon, became the great poet of the First War. A foreigner in France, he developed a poetic language of his own, a skillful combination of learned and popular lyricism. Appollinaire's role of poet-magician combining all possible linguistic surprises, still appears to the new poets invigorating and inexhaustible. He is perhaps the only great French poet whose work is not concerned with the supernatural.

Rimbaud's hell is more central to the tradition. In a recent conversation I had with the director of the Mercure de France, publishers of the handsome volume of Rimbaud's *Oeuvres Complètes*, prefaced by Claudel, I asked about the sale of the book during 1948. M. Hartmann began his reply by saying he was going to surprise me with the figure. For some years now, each day of the year, fifty copies of Rimbaud's *Oeuvres Complètes* are sold. If sales are any indication, Rimbaud is the most read poet in France today.

At the beginning of the theatre season the most eagerly anticipated event was *L'Etat de Siège* of Albert Camus, presented by Jean-Louis Barrault at his Théâtre Marigny. The production was a disappointment, and the failure came perhaps from the close collaboration of two artists who each, under the title of a single work, pursued a different aim. As far back as 1941, Barrault conceived the idea of presenting a spectacle on the theme of a plague (a theme which had once tempted Antonin Artaud). When Barrault learned that Camus was preparing a novel on the same subject, he asked him to write the dialogue for his spectacle. Last year Gide's adaptation of Kafka's *Trial* (*Le Procès*), under the direction of Barrault, had tremendous success, and the principle of the production was not very different from that of *L'Etat de Siège*. But the theme of *Le Procès* was perhaps more dramatically simple and more suitable for the various expressions of dramatic form employed by Barrault, such as the lyric monologue, pantomime, dialogue, farce, chorus.

The ideas of *L'Etat de Siège* are simple and moving. After announcing its advent by a comet in the sky, the Plague invades the city. At first those who governed the city preferred to deny the existence of the pestilence (*Ordre du gouvernement: il ne s'est rien passé*), but they capitulated at last and igno-

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miniously abandoned their posts. The character who plays the Plague takes over the city, with his secretary (Death) who strikes down seemingly at random whomever she chooses. A system of fear and serfdom is installed. The only means of salvation is courage and love which provide man with the necessary lucidity to distinguish those values that must be preserved from the regime of oppression. The hero says, "As far back as I can remember, if a man overcomes his fear and revolts, then the machine begins breaking down." (*Du plus loin que je me souvienne, il a toujours suffit qu'un homme surmonte sa peur et se révolte pour que la machine se mette à grincer.*) After witnessing many sacrifices throughout the play, it is disheartening to see the same mediocre judge and governor reinstalled as guides of the city when the Plague has left.

It is obvious that Camus and Barrault are trying to analyse our own century of bureaucracy, tyranny and incoherence. The best scenes are those in the second act depicting the evils and the stupidity of a bureaucratic regime. The point of the play: the indignation of a man who will not allow his own degradation to be accomplished by a political system, is practically lost sight of because of the particular style of the production, so different from the sober, serious and suggestive style of the novel, *La peste*. The choreography for the 25 or 30 actors is almost too ingenious and too complex. They seem always to be rushing about and hurling shouts as if they were participating in some monstrous review or rhapsody. Spectacular rather than tragic, the entire play seems deluged with words. Speech follows speech in a continuous impression of uproar under the scaffoldings of the set. Some of the Paris critics reminded their readers that the general effect of the Barrault production recalls the work of Piscator in Germany about 1927. Against the confused background of movement and speech, two characters especially stand in dramatic relief: Pierre Bertin as the character of the Plague and Madeleine Renaud, his secretary. The Plague appears first as the spirit of domination and violence. Once his regime is established, he symbolizes more simply the spirit of tyranny, and by the end of his reign he has become almost synonymous with bureaucratic abstraction and the paper document.

Far more impressive than *L'Etat de Siège* was Barrault's production of Paul Claudel's *Partage de Midi,* whose brilliant première took place on December 16, exactly forty-two years after the play was written.

In 1906, 150 copies of the play were privately printed. But further publication was withheld by Claudel until 1948 when he reissued the text and gave permission for its performance. Ten years ago, Barrault had asked Claudel for permission to put on *Partage de Midi,* but the poet had refused, saying at the time, "You will play it after my death." Claudel is today eighty years old, and, with Gide who is seventy-nine, is perhaps the greatest of the living French writers. During the occupation, Barrault's production at the Comédie-Française of Claudel's *Soulier de Satin* was a triumph, and Claudel finally consented to a

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production of his older play, *Partage de Midi,* perhaps because he feels himself today so far removed from the younger man who wrote it. He was present at the rehearsals and introduced many changes in the text. But in speaking with the actors about himself in connection with *Partage de Midi,* he would say, "the author of this play." It is a well known fact that the play is the literary expression of an episode in Claudel's personal life.

Before the December production, many in Paris had read or reread the text. I was one of those who frankly doubted that such a difficult text could ever be recited and presented as a play. I had accustomed myself to that kind of ideal setting and production that one creates in one's own mind as one reads a play. *Partage de Midi* occupies a central position in the entire work of Claudel. The drama concerns only four characters. Their speeches are long, but sober and bare. Each scene resembles a musical composition of two or three or four voices which reproduce a great variety of moods and tempi. In reading the play, the language seemed sufficient unto itself and one almost resented the idea of a theatrical representation. But the Barrault production was something of a revelation. The text came to life in a new way, and now it will be impossible to read the play without hearing the voices of the four actors at the Marigny and seeing them move about the stage.

The production is not overstylized. The language of Claudel controls and dominates all the movement, as if the actors had only to understand it and recite it in order to discover their action and their moods. The play remains at all times a majestic verbal quartet each motif of which is audible and in harmony with all the other motifs. The principal theme is adultery and the secondary theme is the struggle in a man between a religious vocation and sexual love. Ysé, the heroine (admirably played by Edwige Feuillère), pursues in the three men around her, her husband and two lovers, an assurance or a stability which no one can give her and which she will find only in death. She is the dominant character of the play and incarnates the principal idea, defined in Claudel's own terms, as "the spirit desiring against the flesh" (*l'esprit désire contre la chair*). At the beginning of the play, she is a coquette, both provocative and seductive. But soon she reveals herself also as something of the bourgeoise, created for marriage and children, bent upon assuring for herself a maternal and a spiritual security. But fundamentally she is a biological cosmic force opposing relentlessly the power of the spirit and manifesting for Claudel the religious poet, the mystery of a creature's imperfection. Her femaleness wants to reach and enfold everyone, and those whom she cannot join she will degrade.

Mesa, the leading male character (played by Barrault), is precisely the one whom Ysé desires the most and who is for her the most inaccessible. He incarnates not only the lover who comes to a woman for the first time but also that secret force in a man which he is eternally unwilling to yield to

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human love. The religious idea of *Partage de Midi* might well be the impossibility of perfect human love, coming from the fact that we are beings separated from one another. The particular anguish expressed so abundantly in the love scenes between Ysé and Mesa comes from the desire in physical possession of a spiritual union, of a joining with the absolute.

In his own comments on *Partage de Midi,* Claudel has stressed the character of Mesa who, at the beginning of the play, at the noon (*midi*) of his life, at the close of his youth, is returning to China after losing out on an effort to win a religious vocation. He is a bourgeois in the narrowest and meanest sense (Ysé calls him *un sacré petit bourgeois*), totally preoccupied with himself. On the boat he meets the Woman, who has been placed there to cause him to prefer someone else to himself and eventually and mysteriously God to himself. But the play is far better than Claudel's interpretation of it which would seem to turn God into a magician and men into beings resembling puppets. Ysé is the central character, I think, and surely one of the most complex in the French theatre. Amalric, her first lover, played by Pierre Brasseur, sees her not as a coquette, but as a warrior, as a conqueror who wants to subjugate or tyrannize or give herself like some huge animal in pain. Amalric sees her as a stranger among them all, outside of her land and race, looking for tremendous duties and obligations. She is more present than Mesa. She speaks and loves within her own solitude and composes her tragedy around a ghost. From the beginning of the play, Mesa appears as a character existing outside of any struggle. He has been conquered already and no longer seems to participate in his own life. Ysé wages a combat against someone who has ceased being a fighter.

The atmosphere of the first act, a remarkable depiction of an ocean desert, never disappears from the play. It gradually becomes the desert of Ysé's life. Claudel has provided for the stage version of his text a background explanation for the desert theme. When Ysé and her husband, de Ciz, appear in the first act, she states that they have been living in Harrar where de Ciz in his trade of gun-runner was an associate of a certain Rimbaud, a man who had paid no attention to her. Turning away from her husband, she contemplates each of the two other men. She discovers the Christian in Mesa and is attracted by him because, after all, she is a woman searching for the absolute in love. In Amalric she discovers the type of man who knows what he wants, the colonial materialist accustomed to tyrannizing and controlling large numbers of natives. Together the characters form a kind of quartet of criminals. The action of the play transpires between the moment of noon (*partage de midi*) when each character makes a decision separating himself from his previous life, and the moment of midnight (*partage de minuit*) when the tragedy occurs and death in the form of violence and sacrifice comes to join Ysé and Mesa.

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REVIEWS

An Artist's Estate

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

THE COLLECTED ESSAYS OF JOHN PEALE BISHOP, edited and with an introduction by *Edmund Wilson*. Scribner's. $4.50.
THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JOHN PEALE BISHOP, edited and with a preface and a personal memoir by *Allen Tate*. Scribner's. $4.00.

WHEN AN ARTIST IS NEWLY DEAD and his writing done, no task seems more incumbent than the attempt to settle the estate which he leaves to the living. In most instances, our settling is necessarily makeshift or incomplete, but it need not be blind elegy: ghosts, we know, are seldom laid by love alone. Yet in the case of John Peale Bishop, the estate is unusually tangled, troubled with successive and seemingly-conflicting wills, although the pertinent documents are almost all present. His verse is by no means so well known as it should be, and his criticism, by being scattered, has not allowed us, until after his death, to see him as he deserves. As a poet he is, perhaps, elusive, not obscure; his life was outwardly serene but it conceals a sensibility that was courageously tortured; conditions that look identical seem simultaneously to have hamstrung his talents and set him free. He is infinitely discussable, for he raises (how forcibly I was not aware) the crucial problems of writing now, in America, as well as the adequacy of available solutions. He is more pertinent, both in achievement and mechanism, than, say, Kafka. The achievement matters but the torture is instructive, for it is the torture of the creative will, persistently willing to will, but the will being again and again dissipated, and reviving, being frittered or smashed, but always returning. And it is this individual criss-crossing of lively impulse, purpose, and ever-inadequate solution, not conforming to the current, which we are apt to forget, in the universal cry upon death.

Bishop's poetry bears profoundly the impress of his own experience. The life is more than ordinarily involved with the verse, and at the risk perhaps of seeming to shirk the tasks the poetry imposes, I intend to take up Bishop's artistic biography where it impinges most forcibly upon his writing. His verse, though little known, will make its way; yet there is, I believe, a common preconception of Bishop which would have him, like John Crowe Ransom, merely an exquisite stylist, a poet possessed of a delicate but impotent Muse, incapable of coming to terms with the bitter world. Against this preconception

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we can set the life and the verse which contains the man's struggle; neither, except at the creative pitch, are harrowing, but there is always a tension, lively with will and failure, between life and poetry. His technical and moral means lie in that tension. For what Bishop had said of the symbolist poets was as true for himself: "What the symbolist poets sought was not an escape from the life of their times. What they sought was life; they could only report where it failed. The poetic means which they created to that end corresponded to the exasperation of nerves which accompanied the hunt, the distraction of the mind, the extremity of the heart that came with its failure."

John Peale Bishop was born in the Border South, in West Virginia, in 1892. On the spindle side, he came of an old Virginia Tidewater family; his father's people had been New Englanders before Bishop's father drifted South after the Civil War. These data are of more than passing biographical interest: they are as causal and significant for Bishop's work as alienation and lack of family seem to be for many contemporaries. Throughout Bishop's life, the South remained the mainspring of his cultural orientation, and although his later attitude toward it shifted markedly, we can discover in it the source of his most persistent problem. As a child, he says somewhere, he felt he could almost stretch himself into the eighteenth-century, and Allen Tate has pointed out the probable source of Bishop's noble diction in the high talk of the Southern family. Bishop himself, in his essays on American writers, habitually attached an excessive importance to regional origins, and the excess is instructive of the strength of his own attachment. Yet this regional allegiance is, until Bishop's late thirties, little more than an important formative *donnée;* then, it assumes massive importance, for we see that the tradition has been imperfectly absorbed or romantically usurped and that, though the South may have given Bishop pride and a way of life and a saving past, it had also mercilessly trapped his will and thrown him out of American life. The solution was symbolic: "in his last ten years," writes Tate, "he more and more took imaginatively the part of his father, of the outsider, of the *déraciné*." Symbolically, he alienated himself from the South which had trapped him and, by taking the part of his father, attempted to restore himself to the more pervasive current in American life. He himself wrote: "The poet is a product of a border country, of the mixed race and the misalliance. He is a man between two ages. His art is an attempt to recover a civil status and to reconstruct the calendar."

It was the South that sent Bishop first to Mercersburg and then to Princeton; it was American participation in the war that took him to Europe. The period both at Princeton and abroad seems to have been one of natural poetic ripening. At Princeton he became fast friends with Edmund Wilson and F. Scott Fitzgerald, wrote derivative romantic poetry, and assumed that dandy's mask which seems to have disguised his indigence from his pride. But at Princeton, his

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dandyism was a natural response, an extravagance that was right, serving the needs of his Southern pride and his discovery of the romantic's emotional aristocracy. Here, I take it, he first articulated his attitude toward the South, usurping for himself, the Border Southerner, the full-blooded tradition which his mother had carried with her from Virginia. In literature, he studied Shelley and Swinburne, rebelling with them against the eighteenth-century at the same time that he passionately attached himself to the American extension in the South of that same century. The incompatibility seems not to have troubled him for, at that time, I think, he took only so much of the South as suited his needs. By so doing, he committed himself to the rest, the full burden of that past, or to a dead-sober apostasy from it. Even as late as 1933, the decision was still in abeyance, but he was then strongly concerned that we should see the South, not as "romantic", but as "right", and that "grandfather's fat" speaks of imperfections as well as perfections in the age.

The years following his graduation and armed service in Europe witnessed a continued ripening. Contact with Pound and other expatriates chastened his undergraduate romanticism, but development seemed to be slowing down when Bishop returned to New York in 1924 after a two-year stay in Europe. He had been at work upon a novel, *The Huntsmen Are Up in America,* in which he had attempted to solve the expatriate's dilemma and to come to creative terms with his country. But he found himself more alienated than ever. "His failure in adapting himself", writes Edmund Wilson, "prevented him from finishing his novel—since he had planned to bring his hero back from abroad—in any effective way. Brakespeare, his hero, was to have hailed America—to have celebrated and revelled in it; John Bishop, in fact, rejected it." He rejected it for the reasons most of his contemporaries had rejected it—because it was ugly, inhuman, lost to value, insane to will and, almost, hopeless. But it could not be exorcised: it needed still the full act of loving will (no jingoism, this) which Bishop could not summon up. Between the time he left for France again in 1927 and the time he came home in 1933, there passed seven years as crucial and as tortured as Troilus' ten minutes, in Act Five, outside the tent of Diomedes.

For these seven years there are not a dozen poems to show. Tate, visiting at Bishop's retreat in Orgeval, reports that Bishop "had not been happy in that charming isolation . . . he seemed remote and without concentration, except at intervals when he produced in a burst of energy, a group of poems or an occasional story. It was my impression that he felt he ought to produce a popular work. A wit of the Bishop's circle said to me one day that 'John is like a man lying in a warm bath who faintly hears the telephone ringing downstairs.' " He turned, almost desperately in his need to explore his allegiance and recover his energy, to prose fiction, and wrote two books, *Act of Darkness* and *Many Thousands Gone,* in which once again he tried to come to

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terms with that past South which had trapped his loyalty and with living America, rapport with which seemed as impossible as it was necessary. He was beset by guilt; poetry did not come easily to him and his natural romantic manner had ripened technically long before he was able to discover where he was most naturally at ease. He was depressed with what seemed to be the death of his talents and the extinction of his ambitions. An early poem (1923) had apostrophized the sun in a manner rather too Prufrockian in a young poet for serious consideration:

The night has gone into my blood. O take
Pity on me for the old vow's sake

When stripling, ruddy and free I bowed
Under the shadows of the laurel wood

And saw the candid and austere dawn
Brighten, and cried: Before ten years are gone

I shall have ridden the high windy courses
And reined the snortings of the cloudy horses,

A lonely arrogant charioteer,
Green laurel weighing on the burnished hair!

The time is over. I should be glad
For the anger and the tan I had.

I am not Phaeton, but John Peale
Bishop, trailing a broken heel.

Yet the poem is more instructive than it at first appears. If any aspect of Bishop's thought remained with him, it was his poetic vitalism: his natural symbol was the sun, and he enforced it as his poetic means grew and his experience clustered about it. Its sensual and ruddy-spirited extensions came early to him in the Danae and Phaeton myths both of which recur throughout his poetry. This solar symbolism is at first romantic; later, it coalesces with associated classical figures and eventually becomes aborbed into the mesh of Bishop's moral predicament. Thus Phaeton, the sun's son (the pun is present), the boy brilliant with youth and pride, passes into the Platonic charioteer, and the conflict of sensual pride with morally-willed governance is posed. Finally we see the conflict resolved, the union of Phaeton and Plato's charioteer, traditional techniques guiding "the instinctive life" as a dimension is added from

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Bishop's symbolic solution, the imitation of his father. For, if Phaeton were his father's son, Bishop, it should be remembered, "more and more took imaginatively the role of his father, of the outsider, of the *déraciné*." It was the common failure that counted, not the failure of the will but the failure of Man-in-Time. A late poem (1941) contains it all:

This is the hour the youngest dread
Through the dark dared and longed-for hour
When the untried youth starts from his bed,
For the thronged Pleiads lower
And the bright horses display their power.

He knows what fierceness orbs the sun,
Annihilating grace of fire,
And dreads the god's descent upon
The uncurbed plungings of desire,
The son that imitates the sire.

Other versions are elsewhere, the sun always at the centre of them. One recalls the magnificent *sol sensuel* of *And When the Net Was Unwound Venus Was Found Ravelled With Mars*, or the poem which remembers this as well as the youthful Phaeton:

That illustrious thing
Body in all its pride
Cut down: undiminishing
Scaean Achilles died.

Into extolled
Old age, tittering on,
Tithonus terribly recalled
The boy that lay with the dawn.

I have quoted these poems not merely to evidence the instructive development of Bishop's most comprehensive symbol but to point up the essential falsity of discovering in Bishop a conflict between the romantic mode of his imagination and the classical cast of his formal, moral and traditionalist convictions. It is tempting to see such a split, but the over-simplification misses the complexity of his sensibility. Superficially the stern figure of the Platonic charioteer is inimical to Phaeton, but we look again and the incongruity is gone: Phaeton has been swallowed up in the ampler psychology of the charioteer, yet the charioteer, for all his control over his ramping horses, must

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succumb to the fate of Phaeton, "the annihilating grace of time." The notion is not apocalyptic, except as time is the apocalypse for all men.

From France, in 1933, Bishop returned home for good. His personal and artistic metamorphosis was sharp, lively with an energy that told of converging insights. In 1933 alone, he appears to have written more poetry than he had written over the previous ten years. Much of it is superb, brilliant with his liberation. He began to write essays again, and in *The South and Tradition* he came to creative terms with himself as well as the South. "The use of tradition", he said, "is to provide a technique of living and offer a discipline and a pride. We must live from the instincts, for the mind unsupported not only cannot tell us how to behave, it cannot give us any very satisfactory reasons for living at all . . . but the instincts demand a discipline." Spurning the Yahooism of the twenties as a make-believe, he saw that the real peril of living without traditional disciplines meant a life too much like his seven years at Orgeval: "No, the danger is not that, without some form of inherited control, we shall be in for debauchery, but rather that we shall succumb to a spurious refinement, as debilitating as it is unreal, being based not on a fine sensibility, but on fear." Plato's charioteer and Phaeton become, from the impulsion of experience, successive and complementary, not truly antithetical: "What we ask is not repression of passion, but a discipline that will, in controlling it, also conserve it. For this, I take it, is the secret of classical morality, in which it is opposed to romantic morality, which directs us on the road to excess that we may arrive at the palace of wisdom. They are opposed, but there is probably no reason why a man should not successively follow both."

The change is perhaps deceptively simple. The impulsions may have been deeper, less articulate, but I can see no reason why a rational act, as much as an irrational one, should not have the motive power of the full personality behind it. At Orgeval, Bishop had sought an isolated purity, and "too fine a pursuit of purity", as he later remarked, "whether in poetry or morals, leads to sterility." That version of the South which he had usurped, would appear to have been false, or improperly internalized, made subject to a debased romanticism which was incapable of accepting, for better or worse, the entirety. The indigence of the will, as well as his passion, paralyzed his poetry. An act of will, under the pressure of impulse and passion, liberated him and sent him home. He accepted a discipline, formerly refused, in the full knowledge that it was imperfect. It was this knowledge that enabled him to return to America for a fuller act of will in the teeth of a maximum imperfection. To see the problem so, is, I think, to see it as Bishop did. His comment on Auden is to the point: "It is probable that the decision to come to America indicates a change in Auden more significant for his poetry than anything that has happened to him since he got here. It is a heartening rather than a hope,

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not so much an overthrowing of negation and despair as a certainty of the means, not so small, of affirmation he has against them."

The fuller act of will failed of necessity, but not entirely. In taking his father's part, (*Beyond Connecticut, Beyond the Sea*), Bishop thought to recover another tradition as well as the passion of daring of the early Phaeton. The act was highly symbolic: it was intended to come to terms with the gross America, the America that paralysed the individual will. The South, Bishop had seen, was out of the current of American life; while it still preserved the shell of humane living, it could offer no more than a refuge against the gross scientific inhumanity which elsewhere, in America, represented the New England Idea in corruption. In order to confront America, he needed a vantage-point which he hoped to discover in the willed culture of his New England forbears. It needed, however, an act of will too Vergilian for Bishop. He saw quite clearly, I think, that the major role of the major artist was the wilful creation of an American culture, in its absence. Failing that, there were the "minute particulars", and the phrase is the title of Bishop's volume of verse published in 1935. One balances Bishop's inevitable failure,

I had returned
To the land of my fathers without their courage,
Without their hope. Without their faith
I had returned to the land of my fathers.

against the tag of Emerson which he loved to quote:

The missing All prevented me
From missing minor things.
If nothing larger than a World's
Departure from a hinge,
Or Sun's extinction be observed,
'Twas not so large that I
Could lift my forehead from my work
For curiosity.

It was thus a very special, yet courageous, vantage-point from which Bishop looked upon the American world. The failure of the would-be Vergilian entailed, however, no such artistic failure as might have ensued had he embarked on a work beyond his powers. Nor did he resort to the alienation-theme so popular among his juniors, nor attempt a commitment in which the will might be immersed and independence lost. He had long fought free of any literal political dogma: as early as 1933 he had condemned the American Communists for "indulging in an intellectual coma and letting two other men, both dead,

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do their thinking for them." Few things are more appealing in Bishop than his refusal to become "engaged" in the narrow sense; his position was precarious, he must have known, for it made him face up to a grossness so great that the temptation to cover himself with a system or take flight was almost overwhelming. "The aim of poetry," he wrote, "is at the whole man," and his own credo is the magnificent statement of an ineradicable complexity, meshed in his experience of men and life:

> More than once I have tried, like all my friends, to shut myself within a system, in order that I might preach at my ease. But a system is a sort of damnation, which drives us perpetually to abjuration; we must be forever inventing another and this continual fatigue is a cruel punishment. And yet, always, my system was so beautiful, large, spacious, clear and comfortable and everywhere smooth to the touch; at least, it seemed so to me. And yet always something spontaneous and unexpected, out of the fulness and universality of life, arose to give the lie to my knowledge, that childish old maid, the deplorable daughter of Utopia. I could change or extend my criterion as much as I wanted, always it was too slow to catch up with the infinite variety of man. It ran without stopping after beauty, so various in color and in form, dying in the infinite spirals of life. In order to escape from the horror of these philosophical apostasies, I proudly resigned myself to modesty; I became content to feel. I took refuge in an unassailable innocence. And there my philosophical conscience found its rest.

In 1944, five years after his philosophical conscience found its rest, Bishop died on Cape Cod where, in the words of Thoreau, "a man may stand and put all America behind him."

"Propaganda," said Bishop, "is a criticism of life by ideas; literature a criticism of ideas by life." And, perhaps mistakenly, I have given the life so that we may see the ideas it criticised; the same criticisms are in his poetry and his prose, heavily involved with the life. As a writer, Bishop developed late, but most good American writers do develop late. Yet he came to terms with his time and his gross society as profitably, I think, as it could be done, and in so doing, held out the hope of a culture's creation at the hands of a greater artist. "The actual center of Western culture," he said, "is no longer in Europe. It is here. The question is, can we provide that conscious center which the culture demands? . . . I for one am not perturbed by the dangers I shall encounter as an American. I am dismayed by the dangerous changes that may come to Western civilization and in the end destroy its continuity." Thus, if a culture does not quite crack apart in Bishop's later poetry, it is because the poetry, firm in its civilized control, keeps things together:

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I choose this strange inconstant coast,
Where all is won and lost,
Lost and again won,
As though each day were present at creation.
What if the long breakwaters amplify the land,
The sea retire before a widening strand,
When the great waters break? Then all once more is change
And again change. The oldest contours
Of these refluent shores
Are subject always to the sea's revenge.

. . . . . .

Sea-ravished senses easily conceive
What else had been an unquickened thought
Which all acknowledge and none quite believe,
That every ordered change of form
Brings wind's disorder and destroying storm.

Alert to all this natural ebb and flow,
I thought I should be taught to bear
In the salt shudder of this sea-borne air
The fall and flood that's fatal to our history.
The sea, like remorse, is everywhere
And its great wrecks have long surviving spars.
Between two worlds betrayed, between two wars,
I've had no sadder thing to bear than change,
No darker thing than night,
No more dread sight
Than warriors to whom honor is strange.

I must learn again the great part of Man—
Though the lines are scant that any man may speak—
Proclaiming with such passion as I can
The part first played, and nobly, by a Greek.
Time is man's tragic responsibility,
And on his back he bears
Both the prolific and destroying years.
And so, I swear, he must surround each act
With scruples that will hold intact
Not merely his own, but human, dignity.
Let him not fall into our common fault
Which is to ignore strains of corroding salt—
Let me not wash my actor's mask of tears.

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I long to get on with the play—
But then in the background I hear the great bombs drop
And suddenly tremble lest the long play stop
And only throned statues of the great survey
A reign of rubble in a littered day.

The Limits of Poetry

CLEANTH BROOKS

ON THE LIMITS OF POETRY, by *Allen Tate*. Swallow Press and William Morrow. $4.00.

AT A TIME IN WHICH THE NATURE AND VALUE OF CRITICISM is once more being canvassed eagerly, and, if I may say so, a little desperately, the appearance of this collection of Allen Tate's critical essays is opportune. Its appearance will scarcely end the debate, for the debaters are too emotionally involved and too much obsessed with their own problems to heed. But its publication is wholesome and can be illuminating. For Allen Tate has produced, as this volume abundantly testifies, some of the best criticism of our time; and his book throws a great deal of light upon the kinds of criticism that are possible and the relation of these "criticisms" to each other.

The problem of the kinds of criticism and the relation of the various kinds to each other can be got at in two very different ways. One way is that provided by the recently published *Theory of Literature* (by René Wellek and Austin Warren*), a brilliant, systematic analysis of the kinds—literature studied through biography, through sociology, through psychology, through formal analysis, and so forth. Wellek and Warren carefully define and delimit the kinds, show the premises upon which each kind of criticism has to operate, and demonstrate what conclusions any given kind may hope to arrive at. Their book provides for our very muddled literary world an ordering by means of careful definition and precise classification. In short, their book constitutes a methodology, though not a barren one; and it yields the clarification that exact, though not pedantic, systematization can be expected to yield.

The other way to get at the problems of criticism is that provided by *On The Limits Of Poetry*. This book, that is to say, presents the work of an

*Harcourt, Brace. $4.50.

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acute and powerful critic who unites great sensitivity and high intelligence in an actual practice of his craft. I think that the two ways ultimately come to the same thing, and I expect that in a period so self-conscious and yet so confused as ours, we shall need to avail ourselves of both means: on the one hand, the systematic analysis and classification of the possibilities, related to each other and arranged in a hierarchy; and on the other, the example of the critic who makes use of the various possibilities, easily and surely, and without confusion. But my present concern is with Tate's own special performance.

One may begin with a matter that is simple but fundamental. Allen Tate is one of the few critics whose judgment on his contemporaries, often made within the limits of a rather brief review, survives the test of the years which have elapsed. His excellent accounts of Crane, Bishop, and MacLeish furnish examples. As early as 1932 he was able to define Crane's special genius and to isolate Crane's characteristic defect. Later criticism has been able to do no more than expand and amplify the essential judgment. The same can be said for his excellent review of MacLeish's *Conquistador,* which also dates from 1932, the year in which *Conquistador* was published. The praise is high: "Perhaps in this poem, MacLeish is no less able a poet than the young Milton of *Lycidas*. . . ." The judgment against the epic quality of the poem is decisive: "The hero is concerned with his personal survival. He is modern and sentimental; not tragic and ironic." But MacLeish's partial failure is properly, and exactly, referred to the general cultural situation: "I am ungrateful to MacLeish; I have dwelt upon a philosophical limitation that is not peculiar to this poet but is deeply rooted in the age."

In general, Tate has had fewer retractions to make, less tidying up to do, than perhaps any other critic of our time. This quality ought to secure the reader's confidence in Tate, and it does beget confidence; for the basis of any criticism is the sensitivity and justice of the response which the critic makes to the impact of the literary document. Lacking this, the most excellent critical system is useless.

A similar claim can, I think, be made for Tate's reading of the older literature, whether we take his remarkable essay on Emily Dickinson for an example, or his perceptive and sensitive "Reading of Keats," or his brilliant, if somewhat tangled, early "Note on Elizabethan Satire." Keats's poetry is not used as an approach to the writer's personal problems, nor Elizabethan satire as a stick with which to beat his opponents. But having stressed Tate's response to the literary work, one has to go on to say that the response is never mere impressionism, idiosyncratic and irresponsible. It is referred to principles and is served by a total frame of reference.

I have praised the admirable accounts of Hart Crane's poetry and MacLeish's poetry. I do not feel that the critic in either case has trimmed his response down to illustrate a theory of culture or a theory of history. Yet

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both essays make use of a consistent doctrine of poetry and both embody a consistent picture of the modern cultural situation. By the same token, the essays on Emily Dickinson and Hardy and the Elizabethans—not to mention those on Robinson, Eliot, Donne, and Yeats—relate to a coherent view of the history of Western civilization.

The theory of literature which underlies the essays in this volume accords with a theory of history. I say "accords with" rather than "is derived from" because I think that both are parallel derivations from a particular metaphysics. And this in itself is remarkable. For our shattered and dislocated age tends to offer pure specialization on the one hand or, on the other, if there is coherency at all, a theory of poetry which is derived from some overriding theory of history. We get elaborate system building, admirable as a display of sheer dialectic, almost for its own sake. Ronald S. Crane provides a good example. Or we get an impressionism, usually vulgarized and frankly slanted to the Book-of-the-Month-Club mind. For examples, see any issue of the metropolitan book pages. Or else we get—and we get this most often—a confused mixture in which literary judgments are dictated by a theory of the class struggle or—since this is out of fashion—dictated nowadays by American nationalism, or the "democratic" spirit.

Needless to say, the theory of history implied in such essays as "The Profession of Letters in the South," "The New Provincialism," "What Is a Traditional Society?" and "Religion in the Old South," is one that is calculated to provoke a great deal of opposition. As Mr. Tate remarks in one of his essays (published in 1938), his opponents have usually assumed that his "one intransigent desire is to have been a Confederate general, and because I could not, or would not become anything else, I set up for poet and began to invent fictions about the personal ambitions that my society has no use for."

The attack on Tate's position rarely takes a higher ground than this—which means that his opponents have thus far failed to take the initial step toward comprehension: they simply do not know what he is talking about. Mr. Henry Nash Smith is a respectable representative of this group. But the best that Mr. Smith can find to say of Tate's "new conservatism" is that it remains "true to the tradition of the slave-owning class" (see *The Saturday Review of Literature* for October 11, 1948). This is not argument but name-calling: witness, Mr. Smith betrays no embarrassment when, in the next paragraph, he is forced to attribute the same "new conservatism" to Auden, Eliot and Toynbee, though he is unable to produce for these gentlemen any slave-owning ancestors to account for their delinquency.

Perhaps the clearest proof of the fragmented quality of our culture is that no one notices the discrepancy between praising a man for brilliant literary qualities and in the same breath (or on the same page) damning him for talking nonsense about history, society, or philosophy. Tate's reputation pro-

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vides a pat instance. He has made a very real impression upon American letters, and even his most irritated opponents readily concede his brilliance. This, I suppose, ought to be credited to the good sense of our age, and credited perhaps also to that virtue on which a liberal age prides itself, tolerance. But I cannot think that it reflects much credit upon our clarity of mind; and if it does not point to the muddlement of our age, it does definitely point to a hazy and ultimately patronizing view of literature. Let me amplify the last point. The great force of our day has been that of scientism (Tate's term is "positivism") which either reduces literature to a harmless and agreeable diversion, or else frankly turns it into rhetoric in the service of some given cause. In neither case does literature need to be taken seriously in itself. Literature becomes a kind of opium of the people, a drug which Hollywood has learned to synthesize in its own laboratories and to manufacture by mass-production methods. Or, literary techniques, abstracted as pure means, and applied to the problem of selling something, find their most effective application in the output of the advertising office (or the office of propaganda).

The dissolution of literature just described is the logical extension of a concept of literature which gave us in the nineteenth century Victorian escapism on the one hand, and on the other, Victorian didacticism. But many people who deplore both escapism and didacticism, at least in their Victorian modes, stubbornly hold to a conception of poetry which implies this division. And these are the very people who refuse to make the attempt to define ("limit") literature and have small patience with critics who do make the attempt.

All of these last remarks bear very definitely upon the title that Tate has chosen for this collection, *On the Limits Of Poetry*. The title has been chosen deliberately. Lest there be any mistake about it, Tate concludes his prefatory note with this sentence: "I am saying in this book with very little systematic argument that poetry is neither religion, nor social engineering."

This sums up what Tate, for the last twenty years, has been saying, cogently and well. But he has had to say it in an age which is not only confused but which hugs its confusion protectively to itself. It is an age, to use Tate's own words, "of social science," and the resistance which his words have evoked has been, in the nature of things, inevitable. Tate has consistently chosen to meet this resistance head-on. The flank attack, ordinarily, has its advantages. In most situations, tactful statement is not only good manners but effective strategy. Yet there are situations in which direct attack is the only feasible strategy, and direct statement, sure to be regarded as dogmatic and arrogant, is the only statement possible. One cannot make a flank attack upon a fog bank; any motion at all involves direct collision with it.

So much for the relation of Tate's criticism to critics of the fluffier and foggier persuasion. For them, the limits which Mr. Tate sets for poetry will

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doubtless seem self-destroying limitations. For these critics are distressed at any definition of literature that makes it less than co-extensive with "life" itself. "Poetry," "drama," "fiction," and "literature" are the wild deuces in the deck, to which any value may be assigned, and undoubtedly such multivalence is necessary for the game that these gentlemen play.

The characteristic attack on Tate's world view has, however, tended to protect him from the usual attack made upon the "formal" critic, as "bloodless" and abstract. Tate is quite obviously dealing with social history, political affairs, the modern cultural situation, etc. The charge that he is merely concerned with formal analysis (and for most people this means *empty* forms) is obviously, in his case, absurd.

Yet one has a right to claim Tate for formal criticism; and here again his insistence upon the limits of poetry is central. It is his strength, and if, in his diversity and robustness, he stands as an object lesson to less able formal critics, I think he certainly stands as an object lesson to those other critics who, hot for certainties in this our life, discover in formal criticism only a dusty answer to their burning problems.

But the best comment on this point is to be found in Tate's own essays. Take this passage, for example—the present volume yields many examples—on the relation of formal criticism to "history" and to "life":

> Mr. Daiches nicely balances the claims of formalist and historian. The formalist is the critic who doesn't work up, but remains where he started, with the work of art—the "work in itself," as Mr. Daiches calls it, "an end which, though attainable, is yet unreal." Its unreality presumably consists in the critic's failure to be aware of the work's relevance to history. There may have been critics like Mr. Daiches's formalist monster, but I have never seen one, and I doubt that Mr. Daiches himself, on second thought, would believe he exists. (Or perhaps he was Aristotle, who said that the nature of tragedy is in its structure, not its reception by the audience.) . . .
>
> Is Mr. Daiches wrestling with a critical theory, or is he only oscillating between the extremes of a dilemma? From the strict, logical point of view he is entitled merely to the positivist horn, as the general critical outlook of our age is so entitled.
>
> This ought to be the end of literature, if literature were logical; it is not logical but tough; and after the dark ages of our present enlightenment it will flourish again. This essay has been written from a point of view which does not admit the validity of the rival claims of formalism and history, of art-for-art's-sake and society. Literature is the complete knowledge of man's experience, and by knowledge I mean that unique and formed intelligence of the world of which man alone is capable.

In sum, Tate has been interested in the work of art—in its formal properties

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as such, but he has also been interested in history—in the tradition, whether aesthetic, moral, or political—and he has also displayed the practising poet's concern for what will sustain the artist today—including a very healthy and practical interest in his own art. But his various interests have not been allowed to devour each other. Literature, since Tate is not forced to see it as a mere reflection of history, a kind of extension of history, can illuminate history. Literature, since it is not defined as a mere reflection of the poet's own psychology, an ectoplasm of the man, can throw light upon his own problems of composition. The limits set to poetry thus do not prove to be walls that imprison the critic: on the contrary, they are necessary distinctions which, by providing order and clarity, permit the critic real liberty of action, and free his energies. The result is a kind of vigor and wholeness in Tate's criticism that must be the envy of many critics of our generation. It is a yearning for this wholeness and vigor which is probably at the basis of the present fear that formal criticism will somehow cut itself off from "life." But to immerse oneself in the amorphous stuff of life is not to master it, and our very contempt for anything which may seem to deny direct contact with "life" actually constitutes the invisible barrier to knowledge of life, including the special kind of knowledge which literature affords. On this point our muddlement is almost complete.

I say that Tate's wholeness must be the envy of many of our time. How is it that Tate has realized, more than most formal critics, wholeness and stability? Primarily, I should suppose, because of special personal qualities. But, though I do not intend to minimize these, I should like to hazard a further explanation. It is a double explanation. First, the fact that he has himself come out of a "traditional" society, which, though in decay, still retains some of the virtues of a traditional society. On the general nature of such a society, the best commentary is to be found in some of the essays in the present volume. (The application to Tate himself, needless to say, is my own observation: there is no self-congratulation in the essays.) A second and more important reason is the fact that Tate's criticism is grounded upon a coherent metaphysics. If his various critical interests are related but unconfused, it is because he possesses a metaphysics which orders them in relation to each other. The point is worth making, for it is not an obvious one: Tate in his essays never stresses it. Yet, if it would occur to few to regard Tate as a "philosophical critic," with the usual implications of that phrase, still the inward possession of a coherent system probably best accounts for his wholeness and his ability to combine without confusion the various kinds of criticism. At any rate, the system is there: it reveals itself most emphatically in his unrelenting attack upon all the varieties of modern positivism.

I have foreborne making specific comparisons with other eminent critics of our time. Some of the qualities for which I have praised Tate certainly are

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to be found in his compeers. Eliot and Blackmur, for example, instantly come to mind. Even so, I think that Tate's achievement has a very special value for us at this time. In a thoroughly muddled age, he has unremittingly attacked the muddlement at its point of basic confusion. In an age of fads, he is capable of writing: "other subjects (like Existentialism or Kafka's guilt) arrive some morning like insulting letters which, if they are not answered the same day, do not need to be answered at all." In an age of specialization, including literary specialization, he presents perhaps our least limited example of the practising man of letters.

Poetic Grammar

JOSEPH BENNETT

THE WHITE GODDESS, by *Robert Graves*. Creative Age. $4.50.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK is to provide a foundation for the historical grammar of poetic myth. Mr. Graves succeeds both in performing this task and in convincing us that such a grammar is strictly necessary. This makes *The White Goddess* an important book, one of the most valuable for students of poetry in recent years.

Endless avenues open from these pages. Mr. Graves, wisely avoiding any attempt at complete exposition, wishes to provide a basis for study; inevitably he adds to it himself, for his mind works by means of startling accruals. It is fitting that he should expect others to contribute to this accretion of lore; rightly conceived, a historical grammar will make for poetic coherence.

This is not to deny that there is a great deal of nonsense in the book, but it is nonsense of an entertaining sort, such as the exposition of the Chariot of Ezekiel in pursuit of Donne's question "Who cleft the Devil's foot?". There are a number of such detective fantasies in the book—more absorbing, I should think, than any of the thrillers that beguile the massive stupefaction of our age.

A historical grammar, to be generally useful for poetic myth, requires an anthropology, and Mr. Graves is again correct in using the most widely accepted one—the vegetation cycles of Sir James G. Frazer and Miss Jessie L. Weston. Further, he perceives the need for a new discipline, germane both to poetic grammar and anthropology—the study of "iconotropy". He proceeds to illustrate the applications of such a science with demonstrations so plausible in themselves that they force us to re-examine our interpretation of most of

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the principal myths of the ancient world. Mr. Graves defines iconotropy as the deliberate misrepresentation of sets of ancient ritual pictures, used originally as icons in the worship of the Great Goddess, but twisted in meaning after a religious revolution which brought the patriarchal Thunder-God to power. New meanings were propagated by the triumphing priesthood to discredit the deposed matriarchy. These were embodied in the familiar myths current in Homeric times which have passed down to us. Robert Graves' restoration of the Perseus-Gorgon myth central to his argument, and the legends of Philomel, Paris, and the Gordian knot, are better than the familiar versions which do not make logical or poetic sense. With other myths, such as Oedipus, and the Hebrew traditions, he is less successful.

Much of the book is taken up by digressions from the central theme. There are studies of the mystical properties of numbers, and a study of the Apocalyptic Number of the Beast. There is a section on fabulous beasts—Cerberus or Anubis, the black dog of Hades who keeps the secret; the Unicorn-Roebuck, who hides the secret; the Nightmare, who is the Goddess herself; and so on. There are erudite explanations of the astronomical backgrounds of the ancient calendar systems that provided structures of ritual around which poetic myth developed. These speculations on beasts, calendars, numbers and alphabets are essential tables for a poetic grammar, comparable to the inflection of pronouns, or the comparison of adjectives in a conventional grammar.

The principal argument of the book requires close attention; Mr. Graves, where he should be Euclidean in demonstration, is inordinately careless of his reader, dropping and resuming his problems without warning. He starts from a statement that the language of poetic myth current in the Mediterranean and the British Isles before the Homeric period was a magical language bound up with ceremonies in worship of the Great Mother of the Gods. The clues of this language are said to be concealed in two Welsh minstrel poems of the thirteenth century which carried down an oral tradition from the Celtic priest-poets exterminated by the Church before the tenth century. The first of these poems, "The Battle of the Trees," reconstructed by Graves from a jumble-sequence, describes the victory of Gwydion, priest of an invading tribe, over Bran, priest of the established religion. This victory was won by guessing the secret name of Bran and the sacred name of his God. Each lunar month in the calendar is represented by a letter—the letter B, which begins the year, is assigned the month Dec. 24th-Jan. 21st. Each letter, in turn, is represented by a tree. The original calendar alphabet, under Bran, commenced in sequence BLNFS. The victorious Gwydion effected a theological revolution, and advanced his letter N, the ash tree, from the dead winter period Feb. 19th-March 18th ahead two months to April 16th-May 13th, where the tree is in leaf. F, the alder tree of the defeated Bran, was thrust back into winter. Thus the trophy raised by Gwydion over Bran was a new alphabet, running in sequence

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BLFSN. Besides a revision of the alphabet, the religious changes included a new sacred name of the God, and a new calendar; and the Dog, Roebuck and Lapwing were set up as guardian symbols to hide and disguise this sacred name.

The second poem, the "Hanes Taliesin", is a succession of jumbled riddles, each representing a name from the Hebrew Scriptures. Graves, presenting tortuous solutions to these riddles and their sequence, finds that each name represents a letter in the alphabet. He asserts that they are the same names given to the letters of the BLFSN alphabet by O'Flaherty, a seventeenth century scholar who claimed to have received the two chief Druidic alphabets from the representative of an authentic oral tradition. The Greek names of the letters, in proper sequence, form the familiar story of Hercules Bull-Calf, the Dying God sacrificed and re-born annually from the Great Mother. Graves believes that this story, with elaborations and subtleties, is the Single Poetic Theme from which all true poetry must arise. Thus the calendars, the alphabets, the properties of trees and the esoteric poems are "sets of sacred charms in which versions of the Theme are summarized."

The earlier Druidic alphabet recorded by O'Flaherty, the BLNFS, is also a tree-alphabet. Using the trees given by O'Flaherty to correspond with the names of the letters, Graves constructs a series of little essays on the poetic properties of each tree—its place in the calendar and in the alphabet, its botanical, psychological and magical virtues, and so on. This is the most valuable section in the book; the grammar becomes creative and authentic as it opens up a major area of coherent symbolism for poetic utilization.

The thirteen trees representing the consonants of the alphabet stand for the thirteen lunar months of 28 days each, a total of 364 days, which is a sidereal period. Birch, the letter B, the tree of inception, starts the year after the winter solstice, and its month extends from our December 24th to January 21st. Oak, the letter D, the tree of royalty, represents Hercules Bull-Calf. Its month extends from June 11 to July 9, and in the middle of it occurs the summer solstice at which Hercules is sacrificed in accordance with the Single Theme. The thirteenth month has the unlucky elder, the tree of Judas and Crucifixion. It ends on the winter solstice, December 22nd. The extra day, the day after the solstice, is outside the year and is not ruled by any tree or month. It is the birthday of Hercules Bull-Calf.

The five trees representing the vowels of the alphabet mark stations of the solar year sacred to the Great Mother. Three of them are placed at the equinoxes and the summer solstice. The fourth is Yew, the letter I, the leaden Death tree of the Great Mother as Hecate. It is stationed on our December 22nd, the solstice. Its foliage is almost identical in form and color with that of the fifth vowel tree, the Fir. Fir, the letter A, is the silver Nativity tree. It is stationed on our December 24th, the first day of the year. Thus it is next to its sister Yew, the Death tree which marks the last day of the year. Between them lies

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the extra day of Hercules and the Great Mother. And beyond the extra day lie the five hours and 49 minutes which the Phoenix takes from each journey of the earth around the sun. After 1460 years the Phoenix, having grown to the length of the year, matures and is reborn. Augustus killed the Phoenix in 30 B. C. when he stabilized the Egyptian calendar.

To find the secret name of the God contained in this tree-alphabet, Graves solves the riddle of the "unhewn dolmen arch" by complex diagrams which double four of the letters of the alphabet. Two of these are consonants and two are vowels. When I, the Yew of Death stationed on December 22nd, is doubled it becomes J, the mistletoe, the parasite tree of death-sacrifice whose station is on the extra day. When A, the Fir of Birth stationed on December 24th, is doubled, it becomes Omega, the palm or *phoinos*, the tree in which the Phoenix is reborn, the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. The palm also rests outside the year, sharing the extra day with mistletoe.

With the addition of these two vowels and the two consonants, the alphabet numbers 22 letters, of which 7 are vowels. The proportion of the alphabet to its vowels—22 to 7—is *pi*, the Orphic religious formula for the relation of the circumference of a circle to the diameter. The seven tree-vowels correspond to the seven week-days of the Creation, the Planets, and the Pillars of Wisdom. When the vowels are arranged in proper sequence, they form the secret name of the transcendental God of Gwydion, called Dis by the Romans. This was the name contained in the Gordian knot which Alexander thoughtlessly cleft. It was the name passed down orally by the High Priests in Jerusalem—the name guessed at by Josephus and Clement of Alexandria.

Graves obtains from the tree-alphabet, besides the sacred name, a hymn to the Great Mother as Goddess of fury and lust. He presents Ezekiel as the theological innovator who displaced the Great Mother from the Hebrew religion. The change in the alphabet sequence recorded by the "Battle of the Trees" in Britain was, Graves proposes, originally a Jewish one originated by Ezekiel around 600 B. C. to confirm the displacement of the Mother. It was then taken up by the Greek Jews in Alexandria from whence it penetrated the known world as far as Britain. Ezekiel's innovation is the starting point for Graves' attack on the Judaeo-Christian tradition of the Father-God. The attack, by turns fanciful and vehement, is hard to take seriously except as it affects Graves' theory of poetic practice. Partly, it is documentation of the blasphemous theories presented in his most successful historical novel, the extraordinary *King Jesus*. Partly it is a justification of his devout interest in the Great Mother.

Graves' Goddess is White and Mother of Hercules Bull-Calf under the aspect of the new moon of birth—Rhea, Cybele, Demeter, Isis, Eve, Arianrhod. The Goddess is Red and Bride of the Bull-Calf under the aspect of the full moon of love—Aphrodite, Astarte, Ishtar, Delilah, Cerridwen. She is Black and

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Layer-out of the dead Bull-Calf under the aspect of the old moon—Hecate, Proserpina, the Fates, Magdalene, the Morrigan. The Goddess appears under animal aspects as a murderous Nightmare, or a farrow-eating Sow, or a fish-tailed mermaid. Under the aspect of Cat she displays her savagery, either as the Egyptian Pasht, or as the corn-spirit, Cat-Demeter. In all these guises, she has her chosen star-son or Hercules who takes on an aspect complementary to hers, such as that of Irusan the King Cat, large as an ox.

The Goddess as Triple Muse, under her moon aspect, chooses the poet as star-son. Apollo was, in Graves' theory, a star-son who refused to be killed after his one-year reign was finished, and finally superseded the Goddess as Muse. Queen Elizabeth as Gloriana embodied a Goddess tradition which was so strong in England that at Naseby in 1645 the Cavalier battle cry "Queen Marie" opposed the Roundheads' "God our Strength".

In spite of perceptions such as these, the weakest part of the book is Graves' attempt at developing a poetic theory around the cult of the Great Mother. "The function of poetry" he states "is religious invocation of the Muse" conceived as Triple Goddess. "A true poem is necessarily an invocation of the White Goddess." Poets perform the functions of priests in charge of the central myths of the tribe. As such, though born as sons of the Triple Muse, they were once required to memorize the complex grammar of poetic usage as well as the entire canon of poetic literature. According to Graves, when modern poetry achieves the authentic timbre of the ancient poetic charms, it is an accidental reversion to the original language. This view has its ridiculous side, in connection with shivers, horrors and the poet's "passionate and peculiar words."

Catullus, of Celtic birth, and a worshipper of the Goddess in the person of his Lesbia, is an example of the "true poet"—one of few who overcame the Apollo-dedicated Graeco-Roman poetic tradition. Others who pass muster are Shakespeare (*Macbeth*, Cleopatra, *The Tempest*), Keats ("La Belle Dame Sans Merci" & Fanny Brawne), Coleridge ("the Nightmare Life-in-Death was she/Who thicks man's blood with cold"), John Skelton and Ben Jonson (Chief Bards). Blake was the only modern poet who tried to restore Bardism, providing in his prophetic books a body of reference intended as the rudiments of a poetic grammar.

Others, like Donne, struggled to reunite the functions of priest and poet. Donne is claimed as a worshipper of the Goddess in the person of his muse, Anne More; and the *Songs and Sonnets* are preferred to the *Divine Poems*. Skelton had the name of the muse Calliope woven into his cassock; Herrick poured libations of ale to a white pig. Crashaw and Hopkins are examples of victims of this dilemma.

Certainly the most senseless of Graves' categories is that of the "classic poet" who, as opposed to Catullus, ignores the Goddess and concentrates on developing

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his craft. Vergil is the chief culprit here—"True poets do not find it consistent with their integrity to follow Vergil's example". The classical poet characteristically claims to be the master of the Goddess; thus he loses the requisite hair-raising quality. In the French and English classical centuries, the example of Vergil confirmed the faults of Racine, Corneille, Pope and Johnson, who are upbraided for their "rocking horse" couplets and general decorum. The usual sociological interpretation is presented to explain the failings of their age, and Graves is naive enough to use this historical analysis to account for the Romantic movement—"Chartism threatened, the monarchy was unpopular"—etc. Graves does not praise the Romantics—they are faithful to the Goddess but they are ailing, addicted, degenerate, unbalanced, neurotic. Reversions to the Single Poetic Theme like "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and "The *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*" are accidentally inspired. Romanticism, Graves believes, degenerates inevitably to automatic writing in which the poetic trance, exempt from criticism and craftsmanship, is unregulated. According to Graves, the poetry of the present age is composed partly of the unconscious babbling of charlatans and partly of the work of poets-in-exile who indulge themselves with paranoia and eccentric behavior. A point is scored against Dylan Thomas in the well-reasoned critique of automatic writing.

The insensitiveness of most of Graves' opinions is not engaging. Abrupt dismissals, crude categories, and sociological criteria do little towards constructing a poetic theory. These theories must be lumped with his critical studies in comparative religion, and generally dismissed as capricious and irrelevant. What will endure in the book is the encyclopedic amassing of the elements of a grammar. This task, which never will be ended, is a self-perpetuating process of accretion. The materials are here—the declensions, conjugations, moods and tenses—in the form of alphabets, calendars, numbers, and beasts, but all haphazardly dispersed. What is needed now is a German scholiast to codify the abundance of Graves' material into a compact and rational reference work.

Graves offers in this book the activity of genius digging around the origins of our poetic sensibility. It is entirely possible, as he claims, that this sensibility in its primitive state had more plenitude, discipline and sophistication than the self-conscious art which is practiced today. In any case, from this excavation whole systems of coherent symbolism are cast up for our use, systems that, it must be admitted, have a suggestive impact so integrated and so illuminating that they must spring direct from the fundamental associative patterns of the human imagination. Thus in the end we must allow Graves his *frisson*: parts of this work *are* hair-raising.

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Five Books in Search of an Author

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN

PAUL ROSENFELD: VOYAGER IN THE ARTS, edited by *Jerome Mellquist* and *Lucie Wiese*. Creative Age. $3.50.

THE STATURE OF THOMAS MANN, edited by *Charles Neider*. New Directions. $5.

CERVANTES ACROSS THE CENTURIES, edited by *Angel Flores* and *M. J. Benardete*. Dryden Press. $4.75.

JAMES JOYCE: TWO DECADES OF CRITICISM, edited by *Seon Givens*. Vanguard. $5.

T. S. ELIOT: A SELECTED CRITIQUE, edited by *Leonard Unger*. Rinehart. $5.

WE SHALL PROBABLY NOT BE HAPPY, to paraphrase Diderot, until the last critic has been strangled with the gut of the last anthologist. Here are five sizable anthologies of literary criticism and comment, totalling more than two thousand pages, including contributions by almost two hundred critics and commentators, with a dozen of them represented in two volumes, and one, Edmund Wilson, in three. Each of these books could be reviewed adequately in a sentence: it contains a mixed lot of essays. If we devote more space to them than that, it is because in juxtaposition they may cast some light on an important problem, the degree to which our criticism can function co-operatively.

On a scale of increasing critical purity (in a wholly non-invidious sense) *Paul Rosenfeld: Voyager in the Arts* would rank as most impure. With two exceptions (a 1925 review by John Peale Bishop and a 1926 estimate by Joseph Warren Beach) it is a symposium of memorial tributes composed after Rosenfeld's death by prominent workers in the arts who had known and valued him. On the part of Mellquist and Miss Wiese, as well as many of the contributors, the book is a selfless labor of love for a man who seems eminently to have deserved it. Its contents range from a few lengthy essays that seek to place and even to criticize Rosenfeld, to innumerable brief tributes, some of them running to no more than an obituary paragraph, by figures like Angna Enters or Charles Ives who have been criticized or helped by Rosenfeld, and it includes in addition a fascinating section of letters from Sherwood Anderson to Rosenfeld. Of the long studies, Edmund Wilson's "Paul Rosenfeld: Three Phases" easily takes top honors, for its combination of unusual warmth and perception in regard to Rosenfeld with several very revealing glimpses, almost "epiphanies"

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(particularly the scene where Wilson and Rosenfeld, a defiant cabal of middlebrows, spent an evening shortly before Rosenfeld's death rocking with laughter at "one of the high-brow quarterlies," *The Kenyon Review,* and the critical writing of its editor, John Crowe Ransom).

Taken together, the pieces in the book do an extraordinary job of revealing Rosenfeld's "warmth of human temperament," to use a phrase from Kenneth Burke's tribute, even from some rather absurd angles: Mark Van Doren, who scarcely knew Rosenfeld, testifying that he always looked serene and kind coming down West Eleventh street with his shopping; Henry Hazlitt informing us that Rosenfeld never returned his proofs to *The Nation* without changes; Lewis Mumford furnishing us with an unforgettable picture of Rosenfeld, on his rear lawn with Mumford, delicately turning aside to urinate. The only inexplicable omission from the book is Isidor Schneider's affectionate and revealing memorial tribute from *The New Masses,* which leaves one facet, Rosenfeld's relationship to the radical currents of the Twenties and Thirties, unexplored. One of the most significant features of the material included, giving evidence of Rosenfeld's protean personality, is the amount of flat disagreement over the most obvious matters: Wilson assures us that Rosenfeld had a "specifically Jewish" piety toward Alfred Stieglitz, to whom he was "unquestionably obedient," while Mumford assures us equally that he was "never uncritically loyal" to Stieglitz; William Schuman informs us that Rosenfeld was always willing "to revise a previous judgment in the light of newly discovered evidence," Malcolm Cowley that his "weak side" was "his obstinacy"; Roy Harris and other musicians tells us that in regard to music "he was not technically equipped," while Alfred Frankenstein insists that "he could have parsed musical work on equal terms with the professional musicians, if he had judged such analysis important"; and so forth.

Despite all this kindliness, respect, and enthusiastic contradiction, the book leaves the reader with two disagreeable impressions. The first is the pathetic ideal our artists have for the critic. Mellquist says proudly in his Preface that the book is unique in that a group of artists unite to acknowledge their critic, but what they praise in him is a thoroughly degraded function, the critic as "creative patron" (Angna Enters), as "prepared listener" (Roy Harris), as "music lover" (Aaron Copland), as "sensitive appreciator" (Louise Bogan). Even more bluntly, they define the critic as Good Samaritan—supporting young musicians and getting others to support them, dispensing free meals and lodging like an art-struck innkeeper, feeding and clothing Llewelyn Powys, slipping Kenneth Patchen a ten on the street ("like a story-book rabbit," Patchen says), nursing Randolph Bourne at his death—in general an angel in both senses of the word, what Mellquist delicately calls a "seraph" (as one of a series of less-conscious monetary puns: that Rosenfeld found "a point of purchase" for

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his criticism, that he was a "*Voyager* in the Arts" who got his first journalistic scoop by *chartering a boat*, and so forth).

The other disagreeable impression the book gives, at least to a person of the generation that came of age in the Forties, is how alien and remote ("European" is Allen Tate's word in the book) the cultural conceptions of Rosenfeld and his group seem, how impossible and wrong they are for us now, how much they depend on denigrating America—"the waste of talent in the United States" (Wilson) and "our casual and naive America" (Alyse Gregory) are constant refrains in the book. Their concept of criticism as the manifesto, the assembly of a little band of metropolitan free spirits around a magazine, a salon, a marble-topped restaurant table, and a way of life, seems as far from our present needs and activities, when the artist's chief problem seems to be needing a chance to get his work done, as Goethe's Weimar. If it is true that we have our present freedom to concentrate on productive work as a result of the battles and sacrifices, the brave little periodicals and babbitt-baiting of Rosenfeld's generation, it is equally true that (standing on their shoulders, of course) we can see a good deal further than they, and we end by slaying and eating them as ruthlessly as they slew and ate their predecessors.

The Stature of Thomas Mann combines the material for two books, one a collection of memorial tributes to the man in honor of his seventieth birthday, the other a series of criticisms of the work, of which the first should have been ruthlessly omitted and kept for a separate volume. "The ecumenical approach seemed appropriate," Neider says in his frank and eloquent Preface, but this book surely is too ecumenical for comfort. Since all the pieces represent degrees of eulogy, except the two by the Marxist critics Lucacs and Suchkov (and those represent only poor and narrow political readings) the general tone is that of the longest and dullest testimonial banquet, so much so that one wonders why the book was not published by Alfred Knopf, who specializes in such pomposities of publishing about his own literary properties, rather than by New Directions, which generally tends to emphasize less reverential aspects of literature. For the reader who can fight his way through the jungle of birthday greetings, however, the book contains a number of things of great value. The single outstanding piece is a brilliant analysis of "Death in Venice" by Vernon Venable, written ten years ago, which outlines, with a mastery rare in our criticism, the symbolic structure of the story as it develops in dramatic progression. In addition, there are a number of other good pieces, particularly Philip Blair Rice's excellent philosophic study of the Joseph story in "Thomas Mann and the Religious Revival"; the book is full of useful information about Mann's sources, as that the character of Aschenbach is based on Mahler and Platen, that of Settembrini on Mazzini and perhaps on a Russian

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named Licochine at Davos, and that of Peeperkorn on Hauptmann and Tolstoy; and, by printing two or three studies of each work, Neider enables us to profit by their interplay (the Venable essay seems so wonderful, perhaps, because of the studies of "Death in Venice" by Bruno Frank and Ludwig Lewisohn that accompany it).

More than any other factor, however, the book's value comes from the unending emphasis of contributor after contributor on the basic factor in Mann's work: "the eternal dualism" (Hermann Kesten), "dialectically" (Erika and Klaus Mann), "dualism or polarity" (Venable), "the dialectic novel form" (Menno ter Braak), "irony" (Kenneth Burke), "antithesis" (A. F. B. Clark), "ambivalent" (Harry Slochower), "the whole book is a battlefield" (Erich Kahler), and so on. This book's own dialectic contradictions range from an amusing dispute between Mann's children and James H. Meisel, who served as Mann's secretary and assistant, over whether the master works until twelve o'clock sharp or twelve-fifteen daily, to such important issues as Helen Muchnic's assurance that "Mann's characters are at home in the world even when they are cast in the role of guests," versus Burke's reminder that the "outsider", "overburdened with a feeling of divergency," is the central figure in Mann's work.

The book's chief fault is, inevitably, the dizzying apotheosis of its hero. "Embarrassing" is the only word for Charles Jackson's blush of childish hero-worship, as it is for the pieces by three of Mann's children and by his brother Heinrich. Much of the book runs to extremity of opinion: Hedwig Fischer insists that not only is the Joseph story Mann's "greatest and most powerful work," but that the disappointing fourth volume is the best of it; Lewisohn tells us that Mann is "perhaps the profoundest critic of his time"; Stefan Zweig informs us that *The Beloved Returns* "is perhaps his most perfect masterpiece"; and Clark announces calmly that "in Thomas Mann we have the greatest literary artist of our time." What is most annoying about these blurbs is how much space they waste that might have been better used. No attacks on Mann (other than the purely political) are printed; a number of good pieces, like D. J. Enright's "The Forgotten Novelist: A Survey of Thomas Mann" from *Focus Two* and Herbert Muller's enthusiastic chapter in *Modern Fiction*, are omitted; and at least one superlative and unavailable piece, perhaps the most complete and satisfactory study of Mann's work as a whole that we have, William Troy's "Thomas Mann: Myth and Reason" in *Partisan Review*, June and July 1938, has been excluded for no conceivable reason. In addition, several of our best Mann critics are badly displayed in the book. Harry Slochower is represented by a hurried fragment from *No Voice is Wholly Lost*, rather than by a section of his brilliant and detailed study, *Thomas Mann's Joseph Story;* Kenneth Burke is represented by "Thomas Mann and André Gide," which, however important it was in 1931, as part of a "counter-statement," in insisting on the moral ambi-

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guity of the artist, could in 1948 have been supplanted more profitably by any of the brief discussions of Mann's actual texts Burke has scattered through his books* (or by all of them made into a mosaic piece, a technique Leonard Unger uses very effectively in his Eliot volume).

I am not really competent to review *Cervantes Across the Centuries*, being unfamiliar with the body of Cervantes' minor work as well as with almost the whole of Cervantes criticism, including the earlier symposium, *The Anatomy of Don Quixote*, that Flores and Benardete published in 1932. I can thus do no more than report how the book strikes a reader substantially ignorant in the field, and compare it methodologically with the other volumes under consideration. The editors define their purpose modestly in the Preface as making "samples" of the "rich harvest" of modern Cervantes criticism and scholarship available in English for the first time. The book seems to do that supremely well, to present its material intelligently organized into four parts—introductory, criticism, scholarship, and influences on other literatures—and to constitute, particularly in the introductory section, which provides solid biographical and background information for the rest of the book, a genuine and valuable handbook to Cervantes.

High points in the volume (to this ill-informed reader at least) include Jean Cassou's "An Introduction to Cervantes" in the first section, Mack Singleton's "The *Persiles* Mystery" in the third, and several of the purely informative pieces, including Charles Haywood's listing of "Musical Settings to Cervantes." The Cassou essay is of really remarkable breadth, and manages in fewer than thirty pages to cover the whole subject, from the details of Cervantes' life, through his relationship to the social currents of his time, to the influence on his work of such discrete matters as Manichaeism, ritual, the pastoral and picaresque traditions, *cante hondo*, the imagery of night, and such related concepts as irony, relativity, ambiguity, and dialectic. Mack Singleton's piece is an attempt to show that the dating of *Persiles y Sigismunda* as one of Cervantes' last works "has been a scandalous blunder," and to insist, on the basis of aesthetic criteria rather than any positive evidence, that it must be an extremely early work. I am not competent, certainly, to assess Singleton's case, but the plausibility of his reasoning, combined with the similarity of his methods to those of the most fruitful and exciting of modern Shakespeare scholarship, make the piece, whether right or wrong, enormously impressive. The least interesting features of the book, in my opinion, are thin and disappointing pieces by two major figures,

*If nothing else, Burke's account of "Mario and the Magician" would have reminded us that the story occupies a vital role in the progress of Mann's work by finally effecting a dissociation of the guilty artist into two types: a vessel of iniquity, Cipolla, and a cleansed and purified one, the narrator—as opposed to Henry C. Hatfield's bland assurance in this volume that "Cipolla, for all his occult powers, is no artist" and the reading of the story by all the contributors who discuss it as nothing but a pen-portrait of Mussolini.

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Miguel de Unamuno and Benedetto Croce, on, respectively, "The Spirit of Castile" and "The *Simpatia* of *Don Quixote*"; a dull demonstration by Pavel I. Novitsky that Don Quixote would not make a good worker in a Socialist society; and a labored, if ingenious, attempt by Harry Levin to show a relationship between "*Don Quixote* and *Moby Dick*" comparable to that explored by Charles Olson in his excellent "*Lear* and *Moby Dick*." A weighty philosophic and metaphysical study of "Incarnation in *Don Quixote*" by Américo Castro in the book is not to my taste, but may very well be as great as the other contributors unite in claiming his Cervantes studies are.

"Many interpretations seem particularly appropriate for Joyce," Seon Givens writes in her Introduction to *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism*, and she gives us precisely that, along with biographical and other background information, a certain amount of critical "placing", and the inevitable obituary tribute and reminiscence, which is fortunately kept to a minimum (if only because, unlike Rosenfeld's, Joyce's works speak so much more fully for him than his friends can). The personal information about Joyce is chiefly contributed by three of his friends, Eugene Jolas, Stuart Gilbert, and Frank Budgen (the last with two essays), and some of it is of vital critical importance, like Budgen's casual quoting of a letter from Joyce stating that an encounter between his father and a tramp in Phoenix Park was "the basis" of *Finnegans Wake*. The general information is chiefly contributed by Vivian Mercier, a Dubliner with a staggering knowledge of contemporary Irish literature and culture, in his ingeniously-entitled "Dublin Under the Joyces" (although, having told us that in honor of Joyce he made a genteel pilgrimage to the "reputed original" of Bella Cohen's brothel, he certainly should have gone on to list its name and address for future pilgrims).

For some reason, the best studies of Joyce have not usually gotten into book form, and Miss Givens' chief contribution lies in making these available: William Troy's early "Notes on *Finnegans Wake*" (which, Jolas testifies, Joyce thought the most satisfactory of all the early readings of the book); Hugh Kenner's remarkable retrospective reading of *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in relation to the later works, using the sort of multivalent exegesis more commonly associated with *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake**; S. Foster Damon's "The

*Although it seems to me that Kenner, like every previous commentator, misses the formal organizing structure of the book, its dialectic development in terms of a basic symbolic polarity, the warm-dry-fire and cold-wet-water clusters he comes very close to noticing. Thus each chapter begins with one of these triumphant, opposes the other, and ends with a synthesis on a new level, which then develops in the next chapter (warmth of home and mother opposed by the cold dampness of the school imagery in the first chapter, resolved in the warm dark womb symbol of the rector's room; coldness of the home now in the second chapter opposed by the dry burning of Stephen's adolescent passion, culminating in the warm, moist experience with the prostitute; and so on through the book). I lack space to elaborate this progression here, but hope to be able to devote an essay to it in the future.

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Odyssey in Dublin," an amazing job of scholarship and religious interpretation that holds up remarkably well after two decades (better than most written since) except for the now-comic references to the "nastiness" and "cheap tastes" represented by the reveries of that "miserable vulgarian," Marion Bloom; and Joseph Campbell's learned and brilliant, if occasionally over-mystic, "Finnegan the Wake." Another piece that represents a triumph of an odd sort is Richard Levin and Charles Shattuck's "First Flight to Ithaca," which argues a closer parallel to the *Odyssey* in *Dubliners* than in *Ulysses*, and which turns out to be very persuasive but still dubious at the end, marred by a win-both-ways logical structure (if the Homeric character is a giant, and Joyce's counterpart is tall, their point is made; but if Joyce's character is short, it is "effectively ironic reversal"). If Levin and Shattuck had been less anxious to make their case of conscious parallelism, had treated the resemblance as *given*, and had placed their emphasis on the *differences* as insights into Joyce's ironies, their piece would have constituted a real critical achievement rather than a plausible scholarly speculation.

The contradictions in *James Joyce* are not, as in the other volumes, minor differences of fact or opinion, but basic misreadings of Joyce opposed to basic valid readings. The one that can serve almost as a rule of thumb for testing the adequacy of a critic is the identification of Stephen Dedalus with James Joyce. Hugh Kenner shows in great detail what should be obvious to every student of Joyce, that Stephen is not an accurate and loving self-portrait but a distorted and ironic one, that the *Portrait* is not an autobiography but a mocking autobiographical *fiction*, that the Stephen of *Ulysses* is only half of Joyce's personality (needing Bloom to make it fully human), that Stephen's aesthetic is Neo-Platonist as opposed to Joyce's Aristotelian one, and that in short the priggish and cold poseur we know as Stephen could have written none of the great works in which he figures. Nevertheless, James T. Farrell, in his study of the *Portrait*, entirely equates Stephen and Joyce, and informs us that "Joyce's conception of art is *fin de siècle*"; J. F. Hendry flatly describes the *Portrait* as "the autobiography"; Stuart Gilbert, who of all people should know better, writes "Stephen Dedalus (that is, young James Joyce)" and equates them throughout his essay.

Again, many of the essays in this book simply waste space. Irene Hendry's study of "Joyce's Epiphanies", like the theory itself, has the true scholastic stink (and not much else); Philip Toynbee's long study of *Ulysses*, despite a number of good insights, is a foolish attempt, along Wilsonian lines, to chide Joyce for his techniques without fully understanding them; Frederick J. Hoffmann's chapter on Freud and Joyce had a place in his *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, but none here; J. F. Hendry's essay, written as late as 1945, is a finely-woven fabric of misreadings of the *Wake;* and the *two* pieces by Farrell in the book, despite their admirable and touching respect for Joyce as a man,

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are as inadequate as any criticism of Joyce ever written (even to the happy claim that his discovery of a few of Joyce's more obvious devices reveals a "perhaps unconscious symbolism"). Again, these essays are the more painful because of the good pieces omitted: Francis Fergusson's Introduction to *Exiles*, which, although many would disagree with its high estimate of the play's value and performability, is certainly the only serious reading of it we have; Margaret Schlauch's philological study of "The Language of James Joyce" in *Science and Society*, Fall 1939; and important studies of Joyce or his work by Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Alick West, Cyril Connolly, and others, which, from their different angles and with varying degrees of respect, would have flavored the ubiquitous Wilson-derived and Levin-influenced taste of the book.

Leonard Unger notes an important function of his anthology in the Introduction, remarking "In its cumulative aspect the comment on his [Eliot's] work provides a survey of modern criticism from a perspective that is constant and specific." The volume thus becomes a kind of tournament of the critics, and although (as in the case of our amateur tennis tournaments) most of the best players are ineligible, a very substantial amount of good criticism does get represented. The book seems to be organized in a progression from fairly superficial reviews to deep and detailed exegeses, and it is in fact 132 pages before any passage of Eliot's poetry is actually analyzed. Unger has taken the trouble (as Neider did not) to put together mosaic pieces from sections of a man's work, as he does in the cases of Karl Shapiro, Harold Laski, Ferner Nuhn, and others. He also manages, in the thirty-odd pieces he prints, to include a great variety of viewpoints, pro and con, representing a substantial spread of approaches, from pure invective to pure scholarship, from mild Marxism to mild Freudianism, from moral placing to textual exegesis.

One of the book's values lies in the opportunity it gives the reader, along the lines of the tournament Unger suggests, to compare a number of important Eliot studies that are readily available in book form, but are seldom read in conjunction: among them chapters or fragments by Richards, Blackmur, Matthiessen, Ransom, Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Spender, and Leavis. It also makes a number of valuable pieces available in book form for the first time. One of these is "The Bloody Wood," from *The London Mercury*, an exploration by T. H. Thompson of the Sweeney Murder Case from clues found in the poems, which is not only just about the funniest parody of modern criticism written, but includes the most memorable single reading of an Eliot line: the interpretation of "Jug jug jug jug jug" as "the sound of the lysol being poured into the bath" as Sweeney preserves the corpse of Miss Porter after he has done her in. The other, and perhaps more serious, pieces that the book makes available are a series of studies that ran in that remarkable and lamented magazine *The Southern Review* from 1937 to 1942, including Mario Praz's elaborate exploration of Eliot's

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sources and derivations in "Eliot and Dante"; Unger's own reading of "Ash Wednesday" and his tracing of the Rose Garden theme in Eliot's poetry; James Johnson Sweeney's reading of "East Coker," perhaps the single most brilliant exegesis in the book; and C. L. Barber's psychoanalytic interpretation of *Family Reunion*. Of these, the work of Unger, Sweeney, and Barber, along with Louis L. Martz's study of the late poetry from *The Sewanee Review* in 1947, suggests a group working along similar lines, collaborating informally by picking up and extending each other's insights, that seems as promising for current exegetical criticism as anything we have.

As in the case of Joyce, the contradictions in this book represent the fundamental difference between poetic reading and misreading. Here the central issue is the commonest misconception of Eliot's theme, that it beats the present with the past. Paraphrasing *The Waste Land*, Malcolm Cowley says "The past was dignified; the present is barren of emotion," and Granville Hicks argues that the whole of Eliot's method is designed "to suggest the grandeur of the past and the meanness of the present." To these facile misreadings, I. A. Richards opposes a deeper and more dialectic reading of the interaction of these symbols, and says flatly, "Mr. Eliot is neither sighing after vanished glories nor holding contemporary experience up to scorn," and Blackmur, explaining the misconception, writes of the poems: "They measure the present by living standards which most people relegate to the past." On the whole, the book represents a high standard of choice. Few of the evaluations in it are merely whimsical, as are so many in the Mann volume (curiously enough, Richards, of all people, is responsible for the most extreme of these, that "The Hollow Men" is "the most beautiful of Mr. Eliot's poems"). Two of the poorest pieces in the book, the string of pearls about Eliot from Karl Shapiro's *Essay on Rime* and the dismissal of Eliot in Yeats' Introduction to the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, the products respectively of juvenile and senile obtusity, were probably necessary for the record. The only pure waste space in the book are a number of attacks that combine a narrow concept of social responsibility with a staggering ignorance of Eliot's work: the sections from Van Wyck Brooks' *Opinions of Oliver Allston*, Granville Hicks' *The Great Tradition*, and Harold Laski's *Faith, Reason and Civilization*. Their place could readily have been filled by any of the several excellent studies apiece by Maud Bodkin, Francis Fergusson, and Morton Dauwen Zabel.

The chief fault of these books, purely and simply, is that too much of their contents is bad and useless criticism. The assumption behind the sort of collective criticism these anthologies and symposia represent is that the many-faceted, many-leveled nature of important literature requires an equally plural criticism, but this assumption is negated when the only points of view represented are intelligent reading and misreading, and instead of the anticipated interplay, we

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get only simple confusion. Much of our criticism, on the evidence of these books, where it is not bad reading of the text, is no reading at all, but personal or exhortatory material of one sort or another, interesting in a newspaper Sunday supplement but rarely worth preserving between hard covers. Most marked of all is the low stylistic level of the bulk of the criticism, with a few honorable exceptions, ranging from competent dullness to such monstrosities as Farrell's "Inasmuch as I am not familiar with this particular play," like a character in Arthur Kober, and Frederick J. Hoffmann's engaging phrase "brothel house." The translations are almost uniformly bad, unidiomatic, and reductive, even though done, in both the books that use translated material (the Mann and the Cervantes) by a variety of hands.

The books themselves, although several of them are handsome volumes and all are expensive, are careless and slipshod, with innumerable typographic howlers (The Cervantes volume is the worst offender here, with "wrench" for "wench" a mild example). All lack the necessary apparatus: none of the books has an index; only the Rosenfeld and Eliot volumes have complete bibliographies (the latter covering only studies *of* Eliot), with the Cervantes and Joyce bibliographies too selective to be of much use; only the Cervantes and Joyce volumes have adequate contributors' notes, with those in the Mann so skimpy as to be pointless or misleading (Neider identifies Kenneth Burke as "American critic and translator", Charles Neider as "American writer, editor, critic"). The introductions without exception fail to define the criteria of selection, and in some cases no criteria of selection seem to exist (none of the editors but Miss Givens seems to have made any conscious attempt to favor material not previously available in book form). None of the books has the only sensible order for such anthologies, the chronological, so that we may see each critic building on what has been published before: the Eliot is organized roughly on a scale of complexity; the Joyce is more or less chronological by Joyce's work, rather than that of his critics; the Rosenfeld and Mann are organized into arbitrary and rather inconsistent topical categories; and only the Cervantes is organized usefully into meaningful divisions.

From a broader perspective, the conjunction of these anthologies shows an odd problem in our modern authors, as distinguished from a man like Cervantes, which might be called the contrast between the inner and the outer event. Cervantes lived a life not remarkably eventful for a writer in his time: he worked as a valet; he fought at Lepanto and lost his left hand; he was captured by Barbary pirates and enslaved for five years, apparently in a harem; he organized a revolt and was imprisoned, was finally ransomed and returned home; he married one woman and had a daughter by another the same year; he was excommunicated by the Inquisition, imprisoned for fraud, appointed a tax collector, twice more convicted of fraud and twice more jailed; finally freed, he was imprisoned on a charge of murder, but this time exonerated; he died in

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poverty and was buried in a convent. In the course of all this he found time to write a body of novels, stories, plays, and miscellaneous works. In contrast: Mann has lived all his life as a writer, first in Germany and then in exile in Switzerland and America; Joyce has lived as a writer and, for a time, a teacher, first in Ireland, then in exile in France, Trieste and Switzerland; Eliot has been a scholar, a bank employee for a time, then an editor and teacher, first in the United States, then in England. The idea that Mann, Joyce, or Eliot has lived any less fully or eventfully than Cervantes is an absurd one, but they have lived differently, with a political manifesto or a religious conference equivalent to the battle of Lepanto, exile in Pacific Palisades, Zurich or London perhaps equivalent to slavery in an Algerian harem. Where Cervantes' experience is eminently public, dramatic, and critically negotiable, the experience of our characteristic modern writers is private, apparently undramatic, and critically inscrutable to us except insofar as we tap friends and acquaintances for the smallest detail of gossip, and read the works as clues to the man. It is this contrast, this fascinating mystery of the writer's inner adventures, to a very large extent, I think, that has made so much of these books focus on the man, where criticism can help us least, rather than on the work; that makes the Rosenfeld and Mann volumes particularly, and the others to some extent, explorations of a personality, where the Cervantes volume is the exploration of a body of writing.

Our anthologists apparently constitute a problem in themselves. The contributions of both Unger and Neider to their volumes are longer than any of the other essays. Neither can thus be called disinterested, although their different interests have led Unger to compile an anthology emphasizing the sort of careful and imaginative exegesis in which he specializes, and Neider to compile one almost entirely lacking in the qualities of balance, constructive eclecticism, and dogged interpretation (sometimes verging on Kabalism) that his own piece represents. We might guess from this that Neider would dislike criticism, or affect to in nemerovian fashion while being strongly drawn to it, and his Preface tells us:

> Perhaps the best and most important things about any great artist must remain unsaid because they cannot adequately be set down in words—in critical words at any rate . . . And yet, criticism is not without value . . .

We might thus be justified in seeking, in the anthologist, not only the familiar prejudices, vanities, and blindnesses, but a deeper ambiguity, a conflict between veneration for the artist he has chosen to celebrate with a volume of this sort, and respect for the critics whose function seems to be to disembowel him, which would, as it veered one way or the other, profoundly affect the character of his book.

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The principal problems, however, are those of the critics themselves. We tend to think of the new movement in criticism as much more objective, much less Goethean or Johnsonian (in the bad sense), than the body of earlier criticism. Nevertheless, our critics seem to have an occupational hazard at least as great as the oracular growth, a tendency to turn literary criticism into autobiography. Unger, in his Introduction, acknowledges that some of the discussions "are sometimes most significant as self-revelation," but his book is one of the lesser offenders. Typical self-revelations in the other volumes are Malcolm Cowley's contribution to the Rosenfeld book, explaining that "Paul didn't show up as well as I had hoped" when he disagreed with Cowley and stubbornly held to his own opinion; Eliot's letters to *The Times* in the Joyce volume, protesting their slighting obituary, the first mild and sheepish, actually sent, the second bold and eloquent, sent only in fantasy; Waldo Frank's study of Don Quixote as an earlier, prophetic Waldo Frank in the Cervantes volume; Albert Guérard in the Mann book, describing his own political views as "What We Hope (*sic*) from Thomas Mann."

All of these precarious adjustments, of author, critic, and anthologist among themselves, and all in relation to the reader, come in question in these volumes. At one extreme we see criticism as no more than Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Authors: Mann's children telling us the family secrets, while Julius Bab quotes from a letter Mann wrote him explaining the Joseph story and Agnes E. Meyer whispers that Mann has a "mother fixation"; Joyce's friends writing records of their intimacy with him as though they were travelers in a mysterious and unexplored foreign land; Matthiessen, Martz, and Paul Elmer More quoting revealing remarks Eliot made "in conversation," and More adding the hope that "Mr. Eliot will allow me the honor of calling myself a friend." At the other extreme, furthest from the author and his table talk, purest and most ingenious, criticism comes close to a parody of itself, and very little separates the Thompson study of the Sweeney Murder Case from Barber's serious unearthing of Dirty Doings in the Rose Garden, or keeps us from feeling that the Levin-Shattuck piece is a deliberate travesty on Stuart Gilbert's *James Joyce's Ulysses*.

In the last analysis, of course, criticism must follow Blackmur's declaration of independence-interdependence, and be "a self-sufficient but by no means an isolated art." Where the Unger volume brings together Pound, insisting that "nobody ought to be such a presumptuous imbecile as to hold up the autotelic false horizon"; Richards, putting evaluation *before* analysis with the statement "The critical question in all cases is whether the poem is worth the trouble it entails"; and Martz, suggesting that *Murder in the Cathedral* is a good play because it involves so many "fields of reference"; it is obvious that we are no closer to agreement on even the basic function of criticism than we ever were, and that our Balder can be as readily slain by the mistletoe as by big guns and

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big cannon. Certainly criticism has power, or Joyce would not parody his reviewers in *Finnegans Wake;* readers would not see a poem dimly, as they do, through a fog of critical half-readings; Sherwood Anderson would not have written so passionately to Rosenfeld, Brooks, and Frank for the help he thought they could give him; and the bulk of the musicians, writers, painters, dancers, and general peddlers of aesthetic commodities in the Rosenfeld volume would not be so anxious to castrate the critic and teach him to sing soprano lullabies. But we know that if criticism has power, it can sometimes be a power for evil rather than good, and most often a power for soporific dullness rather than either. What we have, in these five volumes, as well as in the score of recent critical anthologies devoted to writers from Donne to Kafka, the dozen magazine symposia on authors from James to Marianne Moore, is the development of a form of collective criticism that casts enough light on an author to enable us to see him. What we want and need, in future volumes of the sort, is a spotlight so bright and sharply focused that the author himself cannot step into its circle to take a bow, let alone the critic or the anthologist. A spotlight just big enough to take in a page of text, in other words.

The World from the Ark

DAVID McDOWELL

PLEASURES AND REGRETS, by *Marcel Proust,* translated by *Louise Varèse.* Lear. $2.75.

THE MAXIMS OF MARCEL PROUST, edited, with a translation, by *Justin O'Brien.* Columbia University. $3.00.

THE TWO WORLDS OF MARCEL PROUST, by *Harold March.* University of Pennsylvania. $3.50.

THE REACTION TO THESE THREE BOOKS is bound to be mixed: the lovers of Proust and the Proust fanatics will certainly welcome the first English translation of *Les plaisirs et les jours,* although perhaps a trifle coldly if they are familiar with the French edition; but they will quite likely be irritated by Justin O'Brien's collection, *The Maxims of Marcel Proust;* and they will undoubtedly feel let down by the unspectacular justice of Harold March's *The Two Worlds of Marcel Proust.* Yet it would surely seem that their needs and desires were never even considered. The first and last of these books are frankly addressed to the general reader, or even to the reader who has read little or no Proust, or certainly the publishers have made every concession in his direction.

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The Maxims of Marcel Proust presents a slightly special case because of the ambivalence of Professor O'Brien's rather smug introduction, which, although obviously intended primarily for those who have read Proust, nevertheless assumes that they were, in all likelihood, either inattentive or rather dull. Yet it seems to aspire, at the same time, to entice those lazy readers who are afraid of long books into an attempt at *Remembrance of Things Past.*

Before going into any of these matters in detail, however, it is interesting to speculate a little on the possibility of a Proust revival that these books appear to indicate—or invite. Except for a few years in the late 20's and early 30's when he was in vogue among the younger literati—although, as Professor March observes, often for rather questionable reasons—Proust has merely been much talked about and little read. There are, it must be said, good reasons for this neglect, reasons strong enough, perhaps, to thwart any attempt at the popularization of Proust's work whether it be by the Modern Library or by the Book-of-the-Month Club, which offered *Remembrance of Things Past* a few years ago as a come-on to new members, or by the various degrees of misrepresentation on the part of the publishers or authors of the above books. In the first place, it is writing which demands quite as much from the faithful and careful reader as does *Ulysses;* secondly, it is a very long and not always available work with the additional disadvantage of being rather expensive for the average reader who otherwise might be generally attracted to it; and last (but not least), after the Kinsey Report, the current crop of fiction dealing with homosexuality and the historical novels on various groups of decadent European aristocrats, it may seem rather old-hat to those who are only looking for another "frank and unafraid" book.

It must be remarked, however, that this neglect of Proust is not a peculiarly American phenomenon. It seems, in fact, to be even more complete in France, where until a few months ago, *A la recherche du temps perdu* was out of print and unavailable.

But much more important than this is the fact that the majority of French writers and critics are just not interested in Proust. Little is said about him, and almost nothing is being written about him. Curiously enough, however, this is not as surprising as it might appear at first glance, for Proust has always had a more secure literary reputation in this country and in England than in France, and the greater part of the really helpful criticism on his work has been done in English. There are, of course, exceptions such as the work of critics like Albert Feuillerat and Léon Pierre-Quint, but even a casual reading of Douglas W. Alden's *Marcel Proust and His French Critics* will astound those who might have expected better treatment of Proust and his work by his own countrymen.

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2.

Proust published his first book in June 1896. It was a strange, uneven, little miscellany containing poetry, short stories, bits of satire, and short impressionistic sketches, entitled *Les plaisirs et les jours*. The first English version, translated by Louise Varèse, is now presented to us under the title, *Pleasures and Regrets*. It must be said, however, that the two books are not quite the same.

Before going into the differences, I should first like to absolve the translator, Mrs. Varèse, of the responsibility for the tampering. I began to be suspicious of some kind of minor fraud when I read the more-than-usually absurd fabrications on the jacket blurb—which, incidentally, almost sets a record-per-sentence for misleading statements and falsehoods. At first the incorrect translation of Proust's *Les plaisirs et les jours* struck me as just another stupid attempt on some one's part to devise a more appealing title. But then I saw Mrs. Varèse's footnote on the first page of her translation of Anatole France's Preface (Page vii), in which, after stubbornly rendering *Les plaisirs et les jours* in the text as *Pleasures and Days*, she comments drily, "*Pleasures and Days*, translation of Proust's title *Les plaisirs et les jours*, which, it is evident, was suggested by Hesiod's poem *Les travaux et les jours* (Works and Days).—L.V."

Further checking cleared Mrs. Varèse as well of the blame for other differences between the two texts. For the record, a comparison with the French showed that in their shabby attempt to pep-up the book for popular consumption, the publishers had left out without comment the eight poems in the section entitled "Portraits de Peintres et de Musiciens," and Proust's very revealing dedicatory preface, "A mon ami Willie Heath," and that they had unaccountably shifted about several other elements in the book.

Les plaisirs et les jours was published when Proust was 25, but it contains work dating back at least to his 20th year. As one might expect, it is full of the usual failures and excesses of the young writer: at least half of the pieces are clearly imitations and exercises, done in a variety of styles; some are trivial or sentimental; and some are merely feeble attempts to get special effects out of flimsy materials. "Fragments from Italian Comedy" and the series of sketches, "Regrets, Reveries, Changing Skies" are almost wholly ruined by one or the other of these faults, although some of the sketches often do sparkle with fresh perception about the French countryside or the weather.

"The Melancholy Summer of Madame de Breyves" and "The Death of Baldassare Silvande" must be passed over quickly. The first is the earliest (1893) of the more important stories and it might well remind the reader of Chekhov, especially of "The Kiss," were it not for Proust's sudden shift from a third-person to a first-person narrator in the concluding section. The first four

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sections demonstrate such an improvement in technique and psychological maturity over the earlier work that one almost forgets, in his delight, how unlike Proust they really are; and examined in this light, the rapid retreat from the economical, hard objectivity of the first sections becomes predictable. "The Death of Baldassare Silvande," though written a year later, is no advance over "The Melancholy Summer." The shift in point of view from that of the small boy, Alexis, to that of his uncle, Viscount Silvande, seems to serve no purpose and is, moreover, confusing. Here also there is more psychological complexity than in the earlier works, but the story is finally almost wrecked by unnecessary sentimentality.

"The End of Jealousy" is, by far, the best story in the book. In fact, it is really quite excellent, and even more like Chekhov than "The Melancholy Summer of Madame de Breyves." It is the account of a young man who is so in love with his mistress that he is convinced that he cannot possibly continue to love her that much. He is nonetheless quite complacent about her faithfulness to him until an acquaintance, who knows nothing of their secret liaison, casually remarks to him one evening that she is notoriously "easy." And although he realizes that this is probably gossip, and despite his confidence that she really loves him, he cannot help thinking that it might be possible for her, like him, to indulge in affairs of mere passion. The thought nearly drives him mad with jealousy, and just at the moment when he becomes reassured, he is run down by a horse and suffers injuries which quickly result in a fatal infection. As he lies helpless on his bed with the realization that he is going to die, he gradually becomes jealous again at the thought of her future sexual pleasures. Just before he dies, however, he realizes in a final flash of perception that he no longer loves her any more or any differently than he loves his servants, his relatives or all mankind. In short, the loss of passion and of life itself is the ironic "end of jealousy."

Here again Proust shifts back and forth between the simple third-person narrator and the omniscient observer. He also lets us know in advance at the beginning of the last section that the hero's mistress actually loved him so much that she closed her *salon* and went into mourning for three years after his death. This device sucessfully complicates an already ironic situation and enables Proust to get maximum returns out of the death scene. However, the story is completely successful even if it is not completely orthodox; and it should be added that similar devices, albeit more subtle and more functional, occur constantly in *A la recherche du temps perdu,* marking the difference between the Marcel of the actual present and the Marcel of the cork-lined room whose sad wisdom is not hampered by chronometric time.

The omission of Proust's dedicatory preface, "A mon ami Willie Heath," is to be particularly regretted, for it constitutes an important chapter in what is one of the most remarkable "textbooks" of a writer's progress. Stylistically

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Proust tries almost everything in this little book, and in addition to the technical tricks mentioned above, various of the themes, attitudes and personal experiences later elaborated upon in *A la recherche du temps perdu,* make their first appearance here. The prose of the dedication is often rather purple, but that does not matter much. What does matter are interesting items in the case history of the relation of homosexuality to Proust's art: the mother-fixation he exhibits and the romantic love he displays for Willie Heath. The mother-fixation is also reflected in several places in the stories. The young girl in "A Young Girl's Confession," Viscount Silvande in "The Death of Baldassare Silvande," and the jealous lover, Honoré, in "The End of Jealousy" on their death beds all indulge in fantasies in which they are carried back to the happiest of all days when their mothers tucked them in, gave them precious good-night kisses and warmed their icy little feet with loving hands.

It is no freak of chance that the latest-written stories in *Pleasures and Regrets* are the most accomplished, or that the best, "The End of Jealousy," was, by all indications, the last one of all. The fact is that by 1896, Proust had arrived at a mature view of the world he wanted to write about, and he had also developed a personal style suitable to his intentions and temperament. During the 14 intervening years between the publication of this first book and the beginning of the actual writing of *Remembrance of Things Past,* Proust apparently added no basic elements to his creative equipment.

Mrs. Varèse's translation is generally excellent. She seems to have made every effort to render the intricacies of the various styles. And it is quite too much to expect perfection in such a formidable task. Proust at his best is not easy to translate, and some of the lyrical passages in *Les plaisirs et les jours* almost defy literal translation.

3.

It is not so easy or so fruitful to comment on Justin O'Brien's collection, *The Maxims of Marcel Proust.* It is, after all, a manufactured article, and as such, it is dependent on the taste and ingenuity of Professor O'Brien. Consequently, it would seem in order, before passing on the text, to examine rather closely the compiler's introduction.

Professor O'Brien has a good many interesting things to tell us about the essential nature of Proust's work, as well as about Proust himself. In fact these general comments make his introduction one of the most perceptive little articles written on Proust. When, however, he gets to the business at hand, he appears somewhat hard-pressed to convince us of the book's *raison d'être.* Some aspects of his intent seem to be: " . . . to perform the service of presenting a great modern writer in a new light. . . . " and for those of us who are frightened by long works to " . . . make Proust more palatable . . . "—but he quickly adds,

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> Yet in all justice it must be stated that there is no short cut to his work, for a collection of his maxims omits much that is essentially Proustian. One of the world's most famous critics wrote: 'The critic is simply a man who knows how to read and who teaches others how to read.' And Sainte-Beuve would doubtless have conceded that *The Maxims of Marcel Proust* was an essay in criticism since it merely isolates for our admiration one aspect of Proust which might otherwise have gone unnoticed. As such it may have the fortune to lead some readers back again to the extraordinarily rich and ever varied *A la recherche du temps perdu.*

These declarations may strike the reader who knows a little Proust as somewhat too ambitious or even as a bit condescending. Certainly the reader who is attracted for the first time to Proust by this volume will in all likelihood feel considerably deceived before he is very far into *Remembrance of Things Past,* especially if he has taken too seriously Professor O'Brien's statement, "Together, these reflections [i.e., maxims] form a corpus which it is not grandiloquent to consider as the statement of Marcel Proust's philosophy."

As for the 428 "maxims" themselves, little need be said. They have been surgically removed from the body of the text of *Remembrance of Things Past,* and often the operation seems to have been quite uncalled for. The sharpness of the specific function-in-context of still others is frequently lost or only partially saved. Professor O'Brien of course tells us that "... Proust never composed any such collection of aphorisms. Probably few intentions were more remote from his mind." And he admits that it would be "footless" to answer those critics who might take him to task for his audacity. To quarrel too much with Professor O'Brien's collection is merely to belabor the obvious fact that *Remembrance of Things Past* is better than his collection—a point he has already conceded.

One or two things should, nevertheless, be remarked upon. A considerable number of the "maxims," particularly those under the heading "Art," are not maxims at all—a situation Professor O'Brien admits in a roundabout way in his introduction by applying to them such diverse terms as: "aphorisms," "extracts," "epigrams," "reflections," "observations," "pensées," "portraits," "diminutive dramas," and "poems in prose." It should also be added that they are extremely uneven, ranging from the trivial, the sentimental and the indifferent to the brilliant, the pithy and the cynical.

4.

Harold March's *The Two Worlds of Marcel Proust* is written for the general reader who has either gone through Proust's work and has come out pleasantly mystified or who has had his appetite whetted for a clearer, deeper under-

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standing of what he has read. It is *not* intended for the small group of special Proust critics or for his fanatical admirers. Indeed, it would not be so valuable or so readable if it were so intended. Consequently, it would be merely perverse to chide Professor March for not having done for us a book full of deep, textual analysis and criticism. What he has done is to obviate, for most of us, the necessity of ever having to pursue the interminable hunting and thumbing through of little magazines, the critical quarterlies, the professional publications, various collections of essays and critical works in French, all of which are frequently hard to get, and many out of print. For in the past it has been in that kind of medium that one found even the basic studies on Proust.

Professor March's organization of the book contributes much to its readability. After a short introductory chapter entitled, "The Climate of Ideas," in which the philosophical and artistic currents and theories of Proust's day are dealt with, he adopts a strictly biographical approach, beginning with Proust's childhood and ending with his death in 1922. This takes up a bit over half of the book, and as I have already implied, it is on a much higher *niveau* than the ordinary biographical study. Moreover, the soundest kind of reasoning may be advanced for this sort of approach to Proust because of the intensely subjective, almost semi-autobiographical, nature of his work. There is no other economical way to demonstrate the abnormal importance to Proust's work and personality of biographical data such as: his life-long attachment to his mother, his complicated manoeuvering as a young man in high society, his chronic illness, the influence of Ruskin on his conception of Art, and finally the peculiar problems arising from his homosexuality. As a matter of fact, it is rather difficult to see how great slices of *Remembrance of Things Past* can readily be evaluated or understood without some similar kind of study.

Professor March then devotes practically all of the second half of the book to a detailed analysis of *Remembrance of Things Past* which includes sections on its structure, characters, themes, and style, as well as some sections which deal with problems, such as *society*, that are more or less peculiarly pertinent to a treatment of that immense novel. And he completes his book with a short chapter on "The Meaning of Proust" in the course of which he attempts a general evaluation and voices a sane plea for an impartial, dispassionate consideration of Proust's work by the readers and critics of Proust.

Professor March goes to great trouble to outline for us the philosophy of the time into which Proust was born and to chart its changing courses and development. It was a stormy period, full of the discovery of new ideas, reaction against the old ideas, and of deep confusion. It was marked by the development of scientific rationalism by such men as Auguste Comte and Darwin, by the assault on the powers of reason by Bergson and the followers of Schopenhauer, and by the shock of the new ideas on sexual abnormality in the writings of

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Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. In the field of art this unrest spawned vogues such as the naturalistic novel of Zola and his followers, the widespread decadent literature of the *Yellow Book* genre, and the symbolist movement. As Professor March points out, Proust apparently felt more or less out of place in the constant in-fighting among the various partisans and as a consequence, had his early literary ambitions discouraged. At any rate, for whatever combination of reasons, he seems to have abandoned all creative work except note-taking between the publication of *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* in 1896 and 1908, the first year in which we know that he actually began writing *A la recherche du temps perdu.* Proust was then in his 37th year; the first volume of the sixteen ultimately composing the complete novel was not, however, to appear until 1913.

The importance to Proust's writing of Schopenhauer's and Hartmann's groundwork in the development of the psychological conception of the unconscious and the beginning of systematic (and sympathetic) study of abnormal psychology would seem to be so obvious that I feel safe in passing on. Suffice it to say that although Proust was never able to overcome completely his feelings of guilt and inferiority, his readings in Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing did nonetheless permit him at times to rationalize his shortcomings. An understanding of this inner moral struggle will go a long way toward helping one grasp the full import of *A la recherche du temps perdu.* Proust clearly wanted to be the master of himself, morally and artistically, but the words he put into the mouth of the dying girl in "A Young Girl's Confession" seem to be an admission of defeat from his own lips: "Désirer avoir de la volonté n'y suffisait pas. Il aurait fallu précisément ce que je ne pouvais sans volonté: le vouloir."

It is not generally known that for ten years Proust devoted the better part of his energy to a study and translation of Ruskin's work on art. This was the period 1899 to 1909. The dates are interesting: they span a considerable portion of the time when Proust was inactive creatively. Judging from the best of *Les plaisirs et les jours,* one might have expected more and better work almost immediately. The equipment was there, yet Proust's mind was barren and his will flabby to the point of complete inaction. That was his state of mind until his "discovery" of Ruskin in 1899. As Professor March points out, "No reader of *A la recherche du temps perdu* can fail to be struck, before he is far advanced in the novel, by the great importance which Art is assuming." And although we may begrudge Ruskin the amount of time Proust gave to him, it is quite possible that if Proust had not been able to strengthen and rededicate himself, to formalize his love of the Beautiful, he might never have had the courage to undertake his immense task. Ruskin converted him to a religion of Art, to a "conviction of the external reality of art,"

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to a love of, in Proust's own words, ". . . Beauty for its own sake, as something real, existing outside of ourselves and infinitely more important than the joys it gives us." He is even more explicit elsewhere:

> The universe took on again in my eyes an infinite value. And my admiration for Ruskin gave such importance to the things he made me love, that they seemed of greater value than life itself.

Proust now had, in addition to the fundamentals of a mature style, a religion. His materials—the memories of his childhood and of the society life he had practically abandoned as early as 1896—had always been at hand ready for his use. All that seemed to be needed was some intense emotional experience to open the floodgates. The death, in 1905, of his beloved mother undoubtedly served such a function, although it caused such a shock to his whole being that it took him almost two years to recover physically as well as mentally. His ordeal was hardly over before he was profoundly moved again. This time it was initially less painful, for it was the beginning of his most serious homosexual attachment. The object of the second greatest love of his life, as Proust himself admitted, was a young chauffeur named Agostinelli, whom he soon made his secretary and who later was to serve, logically transformed into a woman, as the principal model for the character of Albertine. Thus, if formulas could have any validity in the definition of the psychological and inspirational machinery that produces a given work of art, these factors would surely be the most vital known elements in the equation whose end result is Proust's great novel.

As I have said earlier, the long chapter, "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu," and the short one, "The Meaning of Proust" contain almost all the critical analysis in the book. And they have the virtues of being plausible and interesting and of not being idolatrous. In addition, they stand up well after several re-readings and some research into the sources and the French text; and if I may occasionally have wished for more positive comment or closer textual study, I feel that my reaction will not be the one of the reader for whom the book is intended. Which is, of course, to say that Professor March goes as far without distortion or partisanship as he planned to go and, I fear, about as far as any normal, intelligent novel reader, not particularly interested in French literature, would permit him to go without putting the book aside.

I shall not be too surprised if *The Two Worlds of Marcel Proust* attracts a good many new readers to Proust. But even if it does not, it may, and should, put an end to a great deal of silly, uninformed, arty talk about Proust's work; and by way of doing that, it may establish his reputation on a sounder basis. One element of prime importance in Professor March's treatment is his demonstration of the differences between Proust's conception of the *sub-*

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conscious and that of Freud. He reminds us that Proust's word was really l'*inconscient*, the unconscious, and that his ideas on the subject were unburdened by any sexual paraphernalia, and that, indeed, there is absolutely no evidence that Proust ever read any of Freud's work.

The "two worlds" of the title deserves a brief word, largely because I have avoided mention of Proust's widely known experiences with the affective memory, which he termed the involuntary memory. Although it is true that these much talked about occurrences are of considerable importance in Proust's work, it is questionable whether they are as vital as the more normal Proustian pattern of intuition and inspiration followed by conscious memory and contemplative analysis. Proust was, of course, more than normally sensitive to "the world of time" and to "the world of eternity" and he was well aware of their differences, but it is a dangerous oversimplification of the exigencies of the artistic process to press any exclusive distinction too far.

Proust's world, it seems to me, is essentially a strange, almost unreal, creation of memory and the imagination, modified by his physical and moral isolation. It was achieved through an almost ridiculous extension of Wordsworth's dictum about "emotion recollected in tranquility" and its faults and distortions are implicit in the extreme of isolation. Proust remarked in the preface to *Les plaisirs et les jours* that "Never was Noah able to see the world so well as from the Ark." This seems to be such an appropriate statement that perhaps the whole passage bears quoting:

> Quand j'étais tout enfant, le sort d'aucun personnage de l'histoire sainte ne me semblait aussi misérable que celui de Noë, à cause du déluge, qui le tint enfermé dans l'arche pendant quarante jours. Plus tard, je fus souvent malade, et pendant de longs jours je dus rester aussi dans l' *arche*. Je compris alors que jamais Noë ne put si bien voir le monde que de l'arche, malgré qu'elle fût close et qu'il fît nuit sur la terre.

Later in life, beset again by illness, Proust retired permanently to his cork-lined room. It was there, in his "Ark"—harsher critics have termed it his "ivory tower"—that almost all of his novel was written. By that time, there was really only one world left: it was a shadowy world, already lost to Proust as a man, a world only seen and remembered from the Ark. It is that unique and wonderful world that we still have in *A la recherche du temps perdu.*

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